International Toolkit Manual
For Practitioners Working with Young Children and Families in Regions Experiencing or Emerging From Conflict

European Union
European Regional Development Fund
Investing in your future
This International Toolkit Manual is aimed at early years practitioners, teachers, parents and significant adults who care for young children in conflict and post conflict regions who are affected by the impact of conflict.

This toolkit provides ideas for activities for engaging with young children, as well as support materials for adults to help them listen to the voices of young children and to help the children express their feelings and emotions.

Cover image © Persona Dolls Training South Africa

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Other Resources to Accompany this Toolkit Manual

1. Research Papers produced by the International Network leading to the development of the Toolkit Resource Pack
   - Paper 1 - Protecting and Providing for Young Children in Regions Affected by Conflict – A Framework for Practice
   - Paper 2 - A Programmatic Framework in Action for Practice with Young Children in Regions Affected by Conflict

2. Programmatic Framework Diagram (ecological framework) based on the findings from Research Paper 1 - Developed for mapping early years programmes against to ensure young children’s needs are met in conflict affected regions

3. Online booklet showing examples of programmes from around the world mapped against the framework to be found at: www.early-years.org/international
   - Colombia
   - El Salvador
   - Iraq
   - Lebanon
   - Georgia
   - Chad
   - Nepal
   - Northern Ireland
   - Palestine
   - Serbia
   - South Africa

4. Practical resources to use when implementing peace building activities
   - Persona dolls
   - Feelings cube
   - Skin tone paints
   - Mirror
   - Persona Doll Training DVD


6. Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) Toolkit for working with children in emergencies
Background

Photo Courtesy of CINDE Photographic Archive
Background to the International Network on Peace Building with Young Children

The International Network on Peace Building with Young Children is a three year project funded by the European Regional Development Fund under the PEACE III Programme. The Project received £610,000 from the Special EU Programmes Body, based in Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland.

The Network, led by Early Years – the organisation for young children in Northern Ireland and the International Centre for Education and Human Development (CINDE) in Colombia, comprises early childhood specialists, teachers, practitioners and academics from conflict and post conflict regions throughout the world. Membership of the International Network is drawn from the following countries:

- Albania
- Azerbaijan
- Canada
- Colombia
- El Salvador
- Ethiopia
- Iraq
- Israel
- Ivory Coast
- Lebanon
- Nepal
- Northern Ireland
- Palestine
- Peru
- Serbia
- South Africa
- Turkey

Membership also includes organisations with a multi-country remit such as Childfund International, the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development and UNICEF.

EU support for this innovative project has enabled the International Network on Peace Building with Young Children to consolidate and extend its international relationships and to continue to work to develop practice materials, training programmes, advocacy tools and strategies on reconciliation and peace building through early years programmes.

This Network emerged from the International Working Group on Peace Building which was formed in November 2004 as a partnership between the World Forum Foundation and Early Years - the organisation for young children (formerly known as Nippa) in Northern Ireland.
Impact of conflict on young children

There is a growing awareness throughout the world that the impact of conflict on our youngest citizens has traditionally been overlooked. Early childhood professionals and practitioners are now advocating that the early childhood sector has considerable potential to contribute to meeting the needs of young children, families and communities in whatever conflict situation they find themselves.

From Conflict to Peace Building: The Power of Early Childhood Initiatives. Lessons from Around the World

In 2007, a publication entitled From Conflict to Peace Building: The Power of Early Childhood Initiatives: Lessons from Around the World was published by the International Working Group on Peace Building with Young Children. This publication contained stories from eight countries experiencing a range of conflicts and showed that there is an emerging body of innovative work taking place around the world which has the potential to make a difference to the lives of children and families affected by conflict. The book looked at the nature and impact of conflict on children and identified strategies to build and maintain early childhood services that support peace building. Recommendations from the book suggested a need to develop practice materials, training programmes and advocacy tools and strategies on reconciliation and peace building through early years programmes.

Development of the Programmatic Framework and Toolkit

The International Network is also one of six Learning Groups within UNA, the Global Learning Initiative on Children and Ethnic Diversity. The Network produced the following two papers that took into account recommendations from the “From Conflict to Peace Building” book.

The first paper presents an overview of the key issues and challenges facing early childhood practitioners in developing programmes for young children, families and communities in conflict affected areas. It examines the changing nature and impact of conflict on young children and their communities and suggests a framework for developing and implementing appropriate programmes (See figure 1). The programmatic framework is based around an ecological concept (Bronfenbrenner 1979) which acknowledges the child in the context of wider social structures. Thinking ecologically about peace-building, we acknowledge Galtung’s assertion that ‘Peace is more than the absence of War’ (Galtung 1996). Peacebuilding therefore is about addressing not only physical violence and its impact on young children’s lives but also structural and cultural violence. As well as the terrible impact of physical violence we must also acknowledge structural inequalities such as access to healthcare, cultural violence such as gender inequalities and their impact on the young child. Through this multi-dimensional, ecological lens we recognise that peace building must include the legal, cultural and socio-economic dimensions of young children’s lives if it is to be sustainable. This is the approach described in the
programmatic framework which underpins the Programmatic Toolkit.

The second paper maps programmes from around the world that translate theories about working with young children in regions of conflict into practice against the programmatic framework outlined in Research Paper 1.

As a result of these two papers, the International Network on Peace Building with Young Children agreed to develop a Programmatic Toolkit for practitioners. This would be a practical application of the framework that would include materials and resources for working with young children in conflict affected areas based on best practice from around the world. The decision to put the main focus on practitioners was informed by an analysis of key gaps and by the acknowledgment that improving the skills and knowledge base in the early years setting had the potential to effect significant change for children even if there were multiple external challenges. The Toolkit therefore focuses on the practical basis of activities in the early years setting but locates this in the context of culture, governance, the media and research.

Programmatic Approaches and Some of the Learning from the Two Papers

It was evident from the framework informing the two papers and from the different contexts of members of the International Network that when planning programmes for children, practitioners must consider the rights and needs of children throughout all stages of conflict: pre, during and post conflict. This is essential for both the immediate survival needs of, and long term impact on, young children.

It was also evident that a child’s learning environment extends far beyond the immediate setting of the home or early childhood setting outside the home. The Network’s conceptual framework of the child in the context of their family and community was informed and influenced by Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner 1979). The Ecological Systems Theory explains how everything in the child’s social environment impacts on their growth and development.

According to Bronfenbrenner, the environments that effect a child’s development range from the micro system to the macro system. The micro system refers to the relationship between the child and the immediate environment such as parents, home and family. As the child gets older, the microsystem becomes more complex, involving more people such as the early years setting. The macrosystem is the wider set of social structures which are remote to the child but which still have great influence over the child. The macro system includes the wider contexts of institutional patterns of culture such as government policy, economy, the media, war and conflict.

The Programmatic Framework Produced by the International Network

The challenge for the Network was to develop a framework that would allow practitioners to plan programmes that would work at the different social layers that impact on young children during...
all stages of conflict. The Network also wanted the framework to be clear and easy to use and be transferable across countries and cultures.

The International Network has developed the following framework for practitioners to consider when working with children in areas of conflict, which is based on Bronfenbrenner’s Ecology of Development. The Framework is also informed by a child rights perspective and considers the different stages of conflict.

The framework below (figure 1) represents the child at the centre and some of the important social layers that impact upon and surround the child at any given time. From a child rights perspective, these social systems are bi-directional, the child is influenced by but also influences the systems.

The framework provides a useful tool for mapping and evaluating programmes in order to maximise the positive potential

Figure 1. The Programmatic Framework
of the programmes and to minimise the possible negative effects of conflict on young children. It also allows the consideration of the ecological impact of physical, structural and cultural violence and the importance of addressing all of these aspects in sustainable peace building.

Child

While the nature and scale of conflict is different in every situation, children suffer either as a direct casualty or physically or emotionally as a result. Therefore the child is at the centre of our framework and our thinking and all actions must take account of the various environments that have an impact on the child.

Family

Conflict situations can put considerable strain and stress on families and affect their ability to care effectively for their children. The trauma felt by families can be picked up by children and internalised. Hatred and prejudice can also be passed on from one generation to the next. Therefore we must support families in conflict situations. ‘ECD programmes with a strong parent education component can have a particularly powerful impact on social capital by bringing together parents in ways that build trust across divided groups’ (ACEV 2008).

Early Years Setting

According to Connolly and Hayden (2007) Early Childhood Development (ECD) programmes have the ability to encourage communities in conflict to develop alternative visions of the future based around the needs of children. In the aftermath of conflict, rebuilding societies is challenging as they are usually characterised by tension, distrust and hatred. Many interpersonal relationships have their roots in early childhood, therefore interventions in the early childhood years can contribute to attitudinal and behavioural change. All ECD programmes need to be based on child centred pedagogy and focus on building empathy, self esteem and respect for diversity. ‘Like children's education in general, pre-schools are of great and immediate psychological value during war, providing a safe space for children to gather and offering structure and hope in chaotic and otherwise seemingly hopeless situations’ (UNESCO 2002; Nixon et al 1996).

Wider Community

It is not only families that are destroyed but communities can also disintegrate as a result of conflict. Hospitals, roads, sanitation and water supplies can be affected. This can lead not only to suffering and displacement, but to new deeply divided communities being created (Connolly and Hayden 2007). ‘When ECD programmes are designed as social development intervention bridging macro and micro levels in conflict prone societies, they can reach across community divisions and have a positive impact on social capital and pro peace dynamics’ (ACEV 08).

Culture, Economics, Governance, Research, Media

This is the largest and most remote set of social structures that still have a great influence over the child. This includes: the relative freedoms permitted by the national government; cultural values;
the economy; the impact of the media and evidence-based programmes. These influences can affect a child either positively or negatively. From an ecological basis it is vital that practice and advocacy reaches this level. In order to build sustainable peace, both direct and indirect causes of violence must be addressed. The links must be made from practice to policy, media and governmental levels in order to protect the rights and needs of young children both now and in the future.

The programmatic framework provides a structure for critical reflection. While many of the social structures may be beyond the reach of early years practitioners, it is vital that advocacy and other networks address issues in the broader social context. To enable practitioners to view programmes through the ecological lens, we have mapped existing ECD programmes from different contexts to show impact beyond the early years practice level.

**Toolkit Resource Packs**

The Network has produced this toolkit resource pack to be piloted in each of the regions represented in the Network. The toolkit contains:

- The background and introduction to the toolkit
- The two research papers produced by the Network
- The framework for mapping programmes against
- Programmes from around the world mapped against the framework
- Activity cards to support practitioners in implementing peace education in early years settings
- Resources to support the implementation of peace building education
- Support cards for practitioners giving ideas and tips for working with the resources and other areas of peace education
- A copy of From Conflict to Peace Building: The Power of Early Childhood Initiatives. Lessons from Around the World
- The INEE Toolkit for use in emergency situations
Practical Activities

PhotoCourtesy of ITASC, Lebanon
Practical Activities to Support Peace Building in Early Years Settings - working across the programmatic framework at the level of the child, the family and the community

Introduction

“If we start to build a peace in this world, it should start with children and it should start very early…..” (Mahatma Gandhi)

The programmatic framework provides a tool to map early years programmes against to ensure that they are addressing all of the social layers that impact on children’s development.

This section provides ideas for practical activities that can be carried out with young children to support peace building at the level of the child in early years settings. Involving parents in this process can provide parents with the skills to support peace building activities in the home and in the community.

Early childhood peace education starting with young children can be instrumental in building peace at the individual, community and societal levels.

The practitioner’s/teacher’s/adult’s role is critical in supporting children to acquire the values, attitudes skills and behaviours to handle diversity positively and become social actors in building peace. By weaving peace building activities into your work with children, you can ensure that the best interests of children and families are kept at the forefront of your work. Child rights based values of listening, respect, equity, participation, protection and play can be embedded in practices that are age appropriate. This
is peace building at the individual level (peace building from the inside out).

It is vital however that practitioners and care givers take time and space to reflect on their own values, attitudes and experiences before implementing activities or programmes with young children.

Practical peace building work with young children can be achieved through age appropriate activities including using persona dolls/puppets, art, drama, music, storytelling, movement, role-play, discussion and conversation, problem solving, physical activities and games.

These peace building activities in this section are specifically designed to be used with young children aged 3-6 years in the early years setting, the classroom, and the playground, in formal and informal settings in conflict and post conflict situations. These activities are focused on supporting young children's social and emotional wellbeing.

In emergencies or in the height of conflict, priority must of course be given to securing young children's safety and physical protection. In peak conflict situations it is important to provide safe spaces for young children where they can express their feelings and emotions to adults who will respond appropriately. It is also important to provide some sense of normality for young children.

For emergency conflict situations the Inter-Agency Network on Education in Emergencies (INEE)\(^1\) has developed a toolkit which may be helpful for adults working in more extreme emergency situations with young children. A CD Rom copy of the INEE Toolkit is provided in the resource box to accompany this manual or readily available online at http://toolkit. ineesite.org/toolkit/Home.php

Peace building activities should be developed with the participation and co-operation of parents/carers and the community. The role of parents/carers is critical as they are children's first educators and have the biggest influence on children's development in the early years. Community based settings can bring together parents building up trust across divided groups. This is peace building at the level of the community.

**The Reflective Practitioner**

As a reflective practitioner, it is essential that you critically examine the activities and their purpose, and adapt these to fit your specific cultural, local and national situation and the age group of the children you are working with. This requires ensuring you adapt the activities to make them developmentally appropriate for the age of the children, building up a pool of stories, rhymes, songs, cultural/religious/historical and/or different tools and activities from your own environment and that of others. This is important in order to allow children to be exposed to, become familiar with and accepting of other's perspectives and those who are different.

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\(^1\) www.ineesite.org
You, as the caregiver/adult are the crucial element of this programme. It is through your ability, capacity and creativity that this programme will be brought to life. By introducing these elements, by adapting them and building upon them, you will enhance your own knowledge and skills and empower children to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes to help them understand, address, and deal with conflict in a constructive and meaningful way. This will require that you constantly undergo a process of self reflection, assessment, monitoring and evaluation of the impact of your activities on children’s behaviour, attitudes and understanding.

Children are an integral part of society. They are observing, absorbing, and internalising the events and information they experience. They come to pre-school/school with a lot of knowledge and information from their exposure to parents, siblings, neighbours, community members, television and the internet. All of these aspects play a role in shaping their perception and influencing their understanding of events occurring around them (both explicitly and implicitly).

Young children are also “citizens of the world” who are conscious of their roots but open to cultural and geographical horizons with no boundaries (Rinaldi, 2001). If, as early childhood educators, we wish the children in our care to understand this perspective, we need to help children to learn to accept and understand similarities and differences in others, especially in regions of conflict where unfortunately they may get contradictory messages from their surroundings.

We have to explore with young children the similarity and commonness of each one of them as well as their uniqueness or difference. Children also need to learn about the reality of different nationalities and communities in their country. If we wish to educate children to be able to develop respect for others who are different they need to have opportunities to explore the traditions and customs of the different communities they live with. In doing so we give the children tools, knowledge, skills and dispositions to understand respect, and accept others. Dealing with “accepting others” is not easy in day by day life in early childhood programmes and sometimes it feels like a mission impossible living in countries in conflict. However research shows that dealing with difference in early years programmes can make a positive impact on the lives of children (Connolly et al 2009).

There is common ground in solving conflicts on an inter-personal level and in broader circles, such as national, ethnic and religious which are at the root of the conflict situation. Therefore, if children understand and experience conflict resolution and peace building at the interpersonal level that is developmentally appropriate, this will set the foundation for understanding diversity, tolerance, respect, listening and democracy in multiple settings as they grow and develop. Through positive modelling from the early years onwards, children will
realise that in the world there are ways and strategies to deal with conflicts.

ECD programmes can also reduce inequalities by promoting the development of all children especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. This can improve the chances of life success. Peace building education can promote skills that enable children and parents to become change agents for building peace in their societies. This can lead to peace building at the level of society.

It is our responsibility to create a safe, secure and protective environment in the early years setting such as the pre-school/school or any informal environment that encourages children to have a broader understanding of conflict, peace and reconciliation. Exposing children to activities that assist them in understanding and positively embracing cultural diversity and acceptance of others is a role in which you as a practitioner/teacher/care giver can assist the child. As reflective practitioners we may also have to challenge stereotypes and prejudices and encourage young children to have broad ways of seeing otherness. This can occur in planned situations such as when implementing a programme activity. It may also occur in an unplanned situation where practitioners can create a learning opportunity for children.
Peace building activities

Although the themes are presented in the following order, the intention is that early years practitioners, care givers and adults can cover them in whatever way best suits the needs and interests of the children in the setting.

1. **All About Me**: Identity and Belonging
2. **Me and Others**: Awareness of and respect for others
3. **We are all different**: Respecting diversity
4. **I Feel, You Feel**: Emotional intelligence
5. **Listening to Me and listening to Others**: Self expression and self actualisation
6. **Feeling Safe**: Safe and protective environments
7. **Solving Problems**: Conflict resolution skills
8. **Feeling Strong**: Resilience
9. **The Place where I Live**: Families and Communities
Child Focus

Everyone is a ‘ME.’ There is no one else quite like you. You are quite unique. You are important. You have a name. You can feel hot and cold, happy and sad, sometimes you are hungry and sometimes you are not, sometimes you are sleepy and sometimes you are full of energy. But you are always you. And you are very special.

Adult Focus

It is vital that in our work with young children we affirm the unique identity, personality and interests of every child. This is very important in areas affected by conflict where in some cases families may be separated or displaced. When working with large groups of children this can be challenging, therefore it is important to have a variety of ways of working with children to include one to one, pairs and small and large group activities. It is also important that the environment for play and learning reflects the identity and interests of each individual, that they can see themselves in the early years setting.

Two to three lines (as in child focus) that simply introduces the topic in an age appropriate manner for children works well.
All About Me: Identity and belonging

You have a right to a name and nationality. *UNCRC Article 7*

Example questions for discussion:
- We all have a name; do you know how you got your name/who choose it/where it comes from?
- What things do you like to do?
- What don’t you like to do?
- What makes you laugh?
- What animals do you like?
- Do you have brothers/sisters?
- What do you like to eat?
- What is your favourite game?
- What is your favourite colour?
Discussion/Language/Communication Activities

- Bring a mirror into the circle and ask each child to look in the mirror and tell us what they see.
- Ask children to make a happy face...what kinds of things/persons make them feel this way.
- Ask children to make an angry face...what kinds of things/persons make them feel this way.
- Ask children to make a surprised face...what kinds of things/persons make them feel this way.
- Ask children to make a scared face...what kinds of things/persons make them feel this way.
- Tell me one thing you did that made you feel very proud and strong (talk about positive experiences where the child may have solved problems).
- Tell us about your family...(naming family members or people the child lives with).
- Make a list of words that children can link with their body parts...simple to more complex.

Storytelling

- Let child tell their own story(ies)...make up, make believe, parent told stories, from the TV, from others...it is all their own interpretation.
- Let the children talk about the story of their names.
- Let child use puppets to talk about their experiences or to tell a story.
- Let the child tell what fruits/vegetables/food he/she likes/doesn’t like to eat and how he/she feels when they get to eat favourite/disliked fruits/vegetables/food.

Art activities

- Help the child to discuss and label their pictures.
- Draw and/or paint yourself.
- Draw and/or paint yourself and your family.
- Draw or paint yourself in your home, school, play, others etc.
- Draw or paint fruits and vegetables you like and don’t like.
- Small groups of children could put a collage together of their friends or the children they live with depicting their differences and similarities.
Activities to do in the setting

Persona Dolls/Puppets
(Also see support materials on using persona dolls/puppets)
- Use the persona dolls/puppets to initiate conversation with individual children and get them to share their feelings and experiences and to have the child interact with the puppets and share their feelings and experiences.

Creative/imaginary play
- Allow spontaneous role-playing and observe the child and how he/she interacts with others (bring in a variety of clothing, materials, objects for the child to use and interact with).
- Teacher or care giver introduces a topic (when you grow up what do you want to be? where do you want to go?) and invites the child to develop the story and ending (feelings, situations, events, conflicts, reactions).

Dance/Music
- Ask each child to bring their own music/song to the class or sing and share with others.
- Each child develops their own dance movement and shares with others.

Games
- Help children to decorate their own two boxes or bags. One is for keeping things they like and the other is for things they don’t like (the child is able to move items back and forth depending on how they are feeling about things or add new things over time).
- Using old but clean socks, children can decorate and make them into hand puppets with scraps of wool, cotton or felt tip pens, buttons etc into their best friend or someone they like playing with.

Outdoor activities
- Allow the child to choose from a number of outdoor activities that he/she likes to do. Observe their behaviour and how they interact with others. Note how they differ when inside and when they are outdoors….allow individual choice.
Child Focus

It can be a lot of fun talking to and doing things with our friends, brothers and sisters and other children. It is really good when everyone gets along and is helpful to each other…… it makes us feel happy.

Adult Focus

Awareness of the needs of others - children need to develop the capacity to relate and interact with others. They need to develop friendships, get along together and enjoy imaginative and dramatic play with other children. Supporting social development is one of the most important jobs we have as adults and one of the best ways to support social development is to show good social skills, not just to other adults but to children. Children need to feel heard, valued, respected and acknowledged.

Having good social skills helps a child succeed in life. A child with good social skills gets along with peers and develops sensitivity to the needs of others. The golden rule should be treating others as you would want to be treated. Children with good social skills are more likely to develop into socially aware adults who value human rights.
Me and Others: Awareness of the needs of others

Example questions for discussion:

- What things do you do with your friends that make you feel happy?
- Can you think of a time when your friend/s helped you to do something?
- How did this make you feel?
- Can you think of a time when you helped your friend/s to do something?
- How did this make your friend feel?
- How did it make you feel when you helped your friend?
- Has there been a time when someone was hurtful to you?
- How did it make you feel?
- What is your favourite game?
- Do you have friends who like different games?
- What is your favourite sport?
- Do you have friends who like different sports?

Your education should help you use and develop your abilities. It should also help you to live peacefully and respect other people. **UNCRC Article 29**
Discussion/Language/Communication Activities

• Bring a variety of different footwear into circle/group time. Ask the children to think about how it feels to be the person who wears these shoes.
• Use a mirror to look at themselves and others and discuss similarities and differences.
• Things we like to do on our own e.g. paint a picture and things we like to do with others e.g. skipping or playing ball games.

Storytelling

• Encourage the children to tell their own stories about themselves and others - draw out opinions and points of view.
• Choose stories from other sources around friends/getting on together/liking different things/being helpful/hurtful etc.
• Use persona dolls/puppets to tell stories around helpful/hurtful behaviours.

Art activities

• Make greetings cards for friends or family members to show you care about them.
• Draw pictures of things friends can do together.
• Paint pictures of things that make you feel happy.
• Encourage small groups of children to work together to make a collage.

Persona Dolls/Puppets

(Also see support materials on using persona dolls/puppets)

• Use persona dolls/puppets to talk about things they both like/don’t like.
• Use the persona dolls/puppets to tell stories about feelings associated with being included/excluded from a play situation.
• Use the persona dolls/puppets to act out scenarios about helpful behaviours.

Creative/imaginary play

• Make a collage with a group of children to show how everyone can contribute and work together.
• Set up role-play areas e.g. home area/hospital to give children opportunities to experience what if feels like to be someone else – mummy, daddy, baby, nurse, doctor, patient etc.
• Make a helpful hands tree, using handprints for leaves and stick
Activities to do in the setting

Dance/Music
- Dance to different types of music.
- Dance alone, with partners and in groups.
- Let children choose their favourite music and make positive comparisons about the different types of music children choose.

Games
- Play games that need a partner. Partnering can be effective in helping children start to develop awareness of others, their needs and their perspectives.
- Two children can create a boat when singing “Row, row, row your boat.” Have them sit opposite each other on the floor, put their feet together, hold hands and then rock back and forth as the song is sung.
- Play games in small teams e.g. passing the ball over the child’s head to the next child; skittles that can be old plastic bottles with different amounts of sand or water in them; throwing the ball to the children in a circle and calling their name.

Outdoor activities
- What happens when someone falls and gets hurt or is afraid to climb? How can we help that person?
Child Focus

Look all around you…what do you see? Some of us have long hair…some have short hair, some have light coloured eyes or dark coloured eyes, some are smiling and some are not. Some things all of us do…we eat, we laugh and we sleep. Some things we do differently…we might speak different languages or we are all different in other ways too. Sometimes children can feel left out if they are different in some way. This makes the person feel sad. But we are all different and that is what makes up the world. We might have different hair, eyes, skin colour but we might like doing the same things like swimming, playing and painting. Even though we are different, each person is special and important.

Adult Focus

From a young age, children are experiencing and trying to make sense of differences within communities. Research shows that between the ages of two and five, children are becoming aware of and curious about gender, race, ethnicity and disability. Gradually children begin to figure out how they are alike and how they are different from other people and how they feel about those differences. In order to develop empathy, adults should first encourage children to identify similarities and common interests, for example what activities the children enjoy doing in the early years setting or at home before clearly and positively addressing difference for example different celebrations, food, dress. A respecting difference approach is needed when working with young children to challenge prejudice, stereotyping and bias. Adults play a vital role in helping young children to develop positive attitudes to difference.
We are all Different: Respecting diversity

You have the right to be treated fairly no matter who you are, where you live, what your race or religion is or whether you are a boy or a girl. *UNCRC Article 2*

**Example questions for discussion:**

- What colour is your hair?
- Is your hair long or short?
- How many children in the class have black hair/blonde hair/brown hair/red hair etc?
- How many children have long hair/short hair?
- What colour are your eyes?
- What height are you?
- Do you have light skin or dark skin?
- Does your skin have freckles etc?
- Do you have brothers and sisters?
- Do you like to play sport?
- Which sports do you like to play?
- What do you do when you are not at pre-school/school?
- Is there anything you like to do that your friends don’t like to do?
**Discussion/Language/Communication Activities**

- Ask children some of the questions above and add in others which link to differences in your community and differences around the world.
- Use circle time to talk about similarities and differences.
- Use a mirror and pass it around a group of children to look at similarities and differences.
- Say ‘hello’ in different languages.
- Ask the children to bring in pictures of their families and talk positively about all of the families and different family types.
- Ask children to describe how different cultural/traditional/family festivals and holidays are organised and what they do with the adults they live with at/during these festivities.

**Art activities**

- Cut out pictures from old car magazines.
- Compare differences in terms of colour, size etc.
- What are the similarities? e.g. all cars have wheels, engines etc.
- Create pictures and paintings of people – children use a variety of materials e.g. mirrors, paper plates, skin tone paints, wool etc to create images of themselves.
- Make hand prints using skin tone paints and join them all together to make a collage.
- Children can use paper plates and lollipop sticks to make puppets depicting different cultures.

**Storytelling**

- Read stories about similarities and differences.
- Include stories that reflect your local community and stories from around the world that reflect different cultures in a positive way.
- Include stories that also reflect disability in a positive way.
- Share with children stories that have positive images of cultural differences.
- Share with children information books about other cultures, religions etc.

**Persona Dolls/Puppets**

(Also see support materials on using persona dolls/puppets)

- Use the story of the Little Prince and his travelling around different planets and countries to discuss differences of different regions and countries in a positive way.
- Use the persona dolls/puppets to depict different cultures, religions, disabilities etc.
- Talk to the children about the dolls/puppets experiences in a positive way.
- Let the puppets tell their stories about what they do with their families, friends etc.
Activities to do in the setting

Creative/imaginary play

- The dolls/puppets can talk about the festivals they go to.
- Invite the children to talk back to the puppets about their experiences.
- Link to similarities and differences in a positive way.

- Role-play areas should have materials and resources that reflect different cultures.
- Dressing up clothes should reflect different cultures.

Dance/Music

- Listen to different types of music to reflect different traditions, cultures etc.
- Use musical instruments that represent different cultures and traditions.
- Explore dances that reflect local, national and international traditions.
- Sing songs that reflect respect for difference e.g. “We love all the children of the world” or “I am special.”

Games

- Play lotto (matching) games depicting people from around the world, sports from around the world, festivals from around the world, flags from around the world etc.
- Introduce jig-saw puzzles depicting people from different cultures and religions in a positive light.
- Introduce jig-saw puzzles depicting people with disabilities in a positive way.
- Play the game “The Sun Shines on”: Children sit down in a circle and one child is in the middle and s/he says something like the sun shines on all those who have blue trousers; those children who have blue trousers on have to move to another seat; the child who does not get a seat goes into the middle and repeats the exercise etc.

Useful Links

Below are some useful links for working with young children around diversity issues:

**Action Alliance for Children**

**Anti-Defamation League**
Talking to your Child about Hatred and Prejudice [www.adl.org/issue_education/hateprejudice/prejudice1.asp](http://www.adl.org/issue_education/hateprejudice/prejudice1.asp)

**Teaching for change**

**Public Broadcasting Service (PBS)**
Activities that Promote Racial and Cultural Awareness [www.pbs.org/kcts/preciouschildren/diversity/read_activities.html](http://www.pbs.org/kcts/preciouschildren/diversity/read_activities.html)
Child Focus

Everyone has feelings and emotions. Sometimes we feel happy and sometimes we feel sad. Sometimes we feel frightened or lonely and sometimes we feel angry. It is okay and natural to have different feelings and emotions at different times. Sometimes we need help from others to talk about how we feel or why we feel that way. Talking about how we feel to someone who understands can help us feel better.

Adult Focus

Young children depend heavily on adults to help them name and express their feelings and emotions. Children can fluctuate from one feeling to another and have difficulty understanding, naming and expressing their emotions. Adults play a major role in children’s ability to identify, understand and express feelings and emotions in a healthy way. Children learn to label their feelings by having healthy emotional expression modelled for them by adults. It is important that adults express their own emotions in a positive way. For example “that is frustrating, I will just have to take a deep breath and start again.” It is important to remember that talking about feelings can be difficult. We should also be aware of and acknowledge our own feelings about how we can be affected by a child, a parent or another staff member’s feelings and experiences. It is important that children recognise the body language associated with their own feelings and recognise the body language associated with the feelings of others. Children who are able to express their feelings and emotions cope with conflict and problems better and engage in less destructive behaviour than children who do not. We must also be able to handle situations in real time as well as when children talk about their experience. The caregiver’s response to difficult situations such as anger and sadness as they occur is an important model. As anger and fear may be prevalent emotions in situations of conflict it is vital that these are addressed in emotional expression and supporting strategies for emotional regulation.
You have a right to voice an opinion. You have a right to say what you think and feel and for adults to listen to you. 

*UNCRC Article 12*

**Example questions for discussion:**

- Can you think of something that makes you feel happy?
- Can you remember a time when you felt sad? (Acknowledge children’s feelings “that would make me feel sad too”)
- Can you think of a time when you felt frightened?
- Can you think of a time when you felt angry?
- What can you do when you feel sad/frightened/angry? (who can you talk to?)
- Is there anyone you can talk to when you feel sad/frightened/angry?
- How do you know when your friend/brother/sister feels happy/sad/frightened/angry? (describe the body language e.g. his cheeks are red and he is clenching his fists, I think he is feeling angry).
- How can you help if you think your friend/brother/sister feels sad/frightened/angry? (this is important to help children to develop empathy as well as identifying their own coping strategies).
Discussion/Language/Communication Activities

- Use circle time to talk about different emotions.
- Ask children some of the questions above.
- Ask children to show facial expressions of how we look when we are happy/sad/frightened/angry etc. This will help children to recognise the body language associated with feelings in themselves and others.
- Encourage the children to problem solve by coming up with ideas and solutions for helping themselves and others to feel better when they are feeling sad/frightened/angry etc.

Storytelling

- Read stories about feelings and emotions.
- Include stories that suggest how we can deal with feelings.
- Tell the children a story about when you felt sad/frightened/angry etc and how you dealt with it.
- Let the children tell their stories of when they felt sad/frightened/angry etc and what they did, who they talked to etc.
- Let the children tell a story about when their friend/brother/sister felt sad/frightened/angry and what they did to help.

Art activities

- Give children opportunities to paint or draw pictures of things they were doing when they felt happy etc.
- Write captions on the children’s paintings and drawings about what they are telling you in their own words.
- Let children cut out images from old magazines etc of people displaying different emotions. These can be stuck on to paper or cardboard to make a feelings collage.
- Children can use paper plates and lollipop sticks to make puppets displaying different feelings and emotions.
- Children can draw and colour in masks with different emotions, that they can use to demonstrate how they are feeling. Role-plays around different emotions can also help children to associate their feelings with different situations e.g. first day at pre-school; when Mummy went into hospital; when Daddy brought home the new puppy etc.

You have the right to good care of your health. UNCRC Article 24
Activities to do in the setting

Persona dolls/puppets

(Also see support materials on using persona dolls/puppets)

- Use the persona dolls/puppets to talk about feelings and emotions.
- Today the persona doll/puppet is feeling happy, sad, frightened, angry etc.
- Draw attention to the body language of the persona doll/puppet.
- Give an explanation as to why the doll/puppet feels happy, sad etc.
- Ask the children if they have had a similar experience.
- Invite the children to come up with ideas and solutions as to how to help the persona doll/puppet feel better.
- The persona doll/puppet tells the children how helpful they have been.

Creative/imaginary play

- Role-play a hospital scene to provide opportunities for children to talk about how the patients, doctors, nurses and families are feeling.
- Set up a home corner for children to role-play families and the things that make families feel happy and supportive to each other.

Dance/Music

- Listen to different types of music…. slow, fast, jolly, uplifting, calming etc.
- Some music makes us feel happy, joyful, makes us want to dance and skip.
- Some music makes us feel calm, makes us want to be quiet, to take things slowly, to rest.
- Sing songs around feelings and emotions e.g. “When you’re happy and you know it clap your hands.”
- Let children dance to slow/sad music tunes and fast/happy tunes.

Games

- Use the feelings cube in the toolkit to help children name and recognise emotions and feelings.
- Ask the children to roll the cube and see which emotion it turns up.
- Lay out the emotion cards from the feelings cube, ask the children to find a happy/sad/frightened/angry face etc and place it in the cube.
- Make jigsaws with happy/sad faces and let a child put together a picture that depicts how he/she feels.
- Give children strategies to release anger from escalating and reduce the possibility of conflict. Have the children breathe in deeply, raising their arms as if they were balloons inflating. Then ask them to slowly release the air and collapse like deflated balloons. Get them to repeat the process several times.
Listening to me and listening to others:

Child Focus

Everyone has their own thoughts and ideas, their own feelings and emotions. Sometimes you want to share those thoughts, ideas, feelings and emotions. When you want to share your ideas it is important to have adults and other children listen to what you have to say. You can express yourself in other ways too like singing, making art, playing, dancing. It is good to be listened to and it is also important to listen to others as well.

Adult Focus

Children develop their listening skills when you talk with them and expect them to answer. However if we are truly listening and tuning into young children, this is less about answers and more about observing their many ways of communicating verbally and non-verbally - the “100 languages of the child.” Useful ways of promoting listening skills include: telling stories to children and having them imagine what will happen next or tell the story back to you; reading stories to children; playing listening games like telling rhymes and having them guess what the last rhyming word is. Listening skills that are forced upon a child, “Listen to me…right now or I have told you this 100 times…” usually don’t encourage listening because they are imposed on the child. Encourage a positive desire to listen to others and be listened to by making it rewarding and fun. Listening to young children is very important in regions of conflict.
Self expression and self actualisation

Also see practitioners support materials on ‘Listening to Young Children’

You have a right to express yourself in all kinds of creative ways. UNCRC Article 13

Example questions for discussion:

- Do we listen with our ears only? (Listening means using our whole body to pay attention to others...using our eyes for looking, our ears for listening, our mind for thinking, our whole body for concentrating).
- Who are some of the people who listen to you?
- What are some of the things you like to talk to others about?
- How does it feel when no one listens to you?
- Who are some of the people you listen to?
- What can you do to be a good listener? (Look at the person, wait and listen to what the person says without turning away, repeat what the person has said, ask questions if you do not understand something).
- When might it be hard to listen? (e.g. when we feel angry).
- Why do you think it is important to listen to others? What would happen if you did not listen to others? (mother, father, siblings, teacher, doctor, storeowner, etc).
- Why do you think it is important to have others listen to you? (what important information do you want to share...what you like, don't like, something that has happened to you, what you want to do).
Discussion/Language/ Communication Activities

- Pass a 'talking object' such as a stone, shell, puppet or a soft toy around in the circle.
- The children can take turns to pass the object e.g. in circle time. With experience, children may prefer to indicate when they want the talking object.
- When a child is holding the talking object, the child can tell us something about themselves and the others have to listen without interrupting.
- If a child does not want to speak, he/she can pass the puppet/toy on to the next child.
- Children can talk about their families, their pets, their favourite things, the things they like to do etc.

Storytelling

- Bring in people from the community - parents, grandparents to tell stories to the children.
- Encourage listening by reading expressively and with energy to draw children into the story... encourage interactions with the story for example after each page ask a child to tell you what was read to them.
- Give children opportunities to narrate their own story, what they did yesterday, what they did a long time ago.....once upon a time.
- Bring in stories from different cultures and pictures of children who may look different in terms of colour, clothing, background, etc. Tell children about the different cultures...how are all the children alike...how are they different? Start discussions on how we respect others, understand others, and do we all need to be the same or different?
- Encourage children to talk about what their pets (dogs, cats, birds) or the animals around them (cows, sheep, horses) are trying to communicate when they let a sound out (how does it sound when they are scared, hungry, want to go out, what they do to show that they like/dislike something/someone).

Art Activities

- Give children opportunities to express themselves through mark making, drawing, painting and make junk art.
- Invite children to talk about what they have drawn/made rather than asking the closed question what is it?
- Write captions on the children's paintings and drawings about what they are telling you then document this in the child's own words.
- If you have a camera, give children the opportunity to document themselves.
- Give opportunities for co-operative art activities such as making a collage that requires team work. Children can share ideas and
Activities to do in the setting

resources.
• Bring in magazines, newspapers, photos that children can share with one another. Get them to make a collage of different countries, peoples, means of transportation, environment...learning to appreciate how others are similar or different. How can we communicate with one another even if we do not speak the same language...using body language such as smiling, shaking hands, helping one another.

Persona dolls/puppets
• Use the persona dolls/puppets to talk about how they felt when no one listened to him/her or when he/she was afraid to talk.
• Today the persona doll/puppet does not want to talk, only to listen.
• The persona doll/puppet has a problem she wants the children to listen to.
• Children can give their solution to the problem and listen to the solutions of other children.
• The doll/puppet tells the children how it feels to be listened to and how helpful the children have been in solving the problem.
• Remember you do not have to do a pretend ‘voice’ for the persona doll/puppet. They will speak into your ear and you listen and retell to the children.

Creative/imaginary play
• Role-play being a doctor/dentist/shopkeeper etc. How do you listen to the patients, customers etc?
• What do you do if you are a patient or customer and the doctor/dentist/shop keeper does not listen to you?
• Imagine that you cannot hear (cover the child's ears with earmuffs). How would you understand what others are saying or doing?

Dance/Music
• Listening to the music, to the beat, to the rhythm, different instruments etc.
• Can we dance if we can't hear the music?
• Listen to different types of music and stop the music midway...let children guess what music will follow...then play the music and see if they were right. Have them listen again and again to different pieces of music so they can learn to listen well and predict the next musical piece.

Games
• Listen to different sounds in the room, outside and sounds that have been recorded and children then guess what they are.
• Whisper games where children pass on what has been whispered in their ear.
• Games where children have to listen carefully to instructions e.g. Simon Says, What is the time Mr Wolf etc.
• Play rhyme games with the children and ask them to pick out the next rhyming word....red...bed, head, fed...etc.
Child focus

We all have the right to feel safe no matter where we are and who we are with. We don’t feel safe when there is shouting and fighting or hurtful behaviour. If we don’t feel safe, we need to tell an adult who can help us. We need to help others feel safe too by being helpful not hurtful.

Adult focus

Children grow up in environments that can sometimes be violent and harmful. Children cannot play, relax or express themselves if they do not feel safe. There are many ways we, as adults, can help to make the environment safer and more protected for children. This involves protecting children from exposure to violence by making the physical environment safe. In situations of conflict, children can feel also unsafe in their direct environment by being exposed to adults’ fears or through watching news coverage on television. It is important that children feel their environment is safe and that there are adults available to protect, listen and reassure them. Children can help to identify those elements of the environment that make them feel unsafe, frightened or threatened. They can also be partners in helping to make the environment safer for all. This teaches them responsibility and how to care for themselves and others.
Feeling Safe: Safe and protective environments

Example questions for discussion:

• Where do you feel safe? What makes you feel safe?
• Is there anywhere that you don’t feel safe?
• How does that make you feel?
• What kinds of behaviours are hurtful?
• Can we sometimes do things to others that are hurtful?
• How can we get help with this? Who can help us?
  Where do you see violence happening around you?
• How does that make you feel?
• Is there anything or anybody that helps you feel safe when this happens?

You have the right to feel safe and protected. *UNCRC Article 19*
Discussion/Language/Communication Activities

- What makes you feel safe? Have a discussion with children that helps them to identify three things that make them feel safe (being with mummy, daddy or another person, playing in their room, sitting in a corner with their favourite storybook or doll, being at the pre-school, safe space). Let the children describe what it feels like to be safe...sense of happiness, relaxation, no worrying, etc.

- Have children discuss three things that made them feel scared. For example feeling scared in the dark. Children in areas of conflict may describe being scared by the sound of gunfire or explosions. Practitioners should be prepared to give an honest response that recognises children's fears and at the same time gives reassurance.

- Have a discussion on how to keep safe, both indoors and when outdoors.

Storytelling

- Read stories that deal with feeling safe, feeling scared and allaying fears.
- You as adults can tell your own stories of what made you feel safe, frightened etc when you were young and who helped you or what you did to help yourself.

- Children can tell their own stories of when they felt safe, happy and warm and when they felt unsafe.
- Children can tell stories about how their pets or animals around them behaved when they were scared/felt unsafe. How do children comfort their pets/animals around them in such situations?

Art Activities

- Get magazines and newspapers and let children cut out pictures of things that are safe and not so safe. Have them make a collage of all the safe things and put all the unsafe things on another page.

- Have children draw their trip from home to the school. Help them to identify any safety issues they are faced with. Take the drawing home to share with carers/parents.

- Have children draw a picture of their “safe zone,” the place they go to when they want to feel safe and happy.

- Children could be given different materials to build/create scenes/times when they feel happy, secure and safe and who is there making
Activities to do in the setting

them feel safe. Equally, different materials could be used to depict less happy/safe experiences.

Persona dolls/puppets

- Persona doll is crying. She is feeling scared because people around her are shouting/fighting. Someone pushed hard and knocked her over. What can we do to help?
- Persona doll doesn't like sleeping in the dark, what could she do to help her feel safe?
- Persona doll heard loud and scary noises outside. He thinks it might be gunfire; who can he go to for help?

Creative/imaginary play

- Have children imagine they are building their own house or home. Where would they build this and who would you invite to the house?
- Identify three areas in your environment where children feel safe/unsafe. Let them use bottles filled with coloured water e.g red and green and place these in the safe and unsafe areas. Work together to change the areas so that they feel safe.

- Use of role-play for children to show how they feel when they are scared or dealing with unsafe situations. This could be extended by the children showing what will make the situation better for them or others, with the adult watching to step in and make suggestions to change the situation.

Dance/Movement/Music

- Safe Islands (this is a variation on musical chairs). You need four large sheets of paper or pieces of material or mats etc. These will form imaginary islands. You will also need music. The adult demonstrates that when the music plays, the swimming around starts and children can pretend to swim also. When the music stops, the shark is looking for his dinner and everyone has to find a place on an island and keep each other safe. As the game continues, the adult removes one island each turn. Children are encouraged to keep each other safe. The game continues until all the children are on the last island.
Child focus

We love to play with others; we can have a really great time together. Most of the time we like doing the same things but sometimes we want to do different things and sometimes we don’t agree about things. We feel angry and find it difficult to listen to others and understand them. Sometimes we need help to work things out.

Adult focus

Everyday life is full of problems. Problems are not the “problem;” it is how we address the problem and the methods that we choose that can lead to positive or negative outcomes. Teachers play an instrumental role in helping children to develop positive problem solving techniques. This includes: identifying and defining the problem; finding a solution that both sides can agree to; helping children to put their solution into practice and then reflecting on the solution and outcome with the children.

This is a lengthy process that requires teacher-child dialogue and interaction, but is more fruitful in the long run because it provides children with skills they can use to solve other problems in the future. There are many times when adults may seek to solve a problem or end conflict by telling children to stop or be good, but words will only temporarily stop the behaviour. Or the adult may impose the solution such as time out or telling children they have to share. These approaches are adult driven and do not generate the capacity within the child to be a problem solver. Allowing the child to define the problem, come up with reasonable solutions and test to see if their solutions work is a long term strategy that empowers children to be active in changing their own behaviour.
Solving Problems: Conflict resolution skills

Positive steps to problem solving

The following outlines a strategy which focuses on building the skills of the child as a problem solver. When a problem arises in the early years setting the adult should:

1. Approach the situation calmly, stopping any hurtful actions. Position yourself between the children, down at their level; use a calm voice and remain neutral rather than taking sides.

2. Acknowledge the children’s feelings. Say something simple such as “You look really upset”.

3. Gather information. Ask “What’s the problem?” Do not ask “why” questions as young children focus on what the problem is rather than understanding the reasons behind it.

4. Restate the problem: “So the problem is...” Use and extend the children’s own words, substituting non-judgemental words for any hurtful words eg ‘stupid’ or ‘bad’ if needed.

5. Ask for solutions and choose one together. Ask “What can we do to solve this problem?” Encourage children to think of a solution but offer options if the children are unable to at first.

6. Choose a solution together and acknowledge children’s accomplishments. e.g., “You solved the problem!” Stay nearby in case anyone is not happy with the solution and the process needs repeating.

Your education should help you use and develop your talents and abilities. It should also help you to learn to live peacefully, protect the environment and respect other people.

UNCRC Article 29
Discussion/Language/Communication Activities

- Give two children a box of crayons. Have them decide how they will divide the box of crayons between a group of four children. What will they do if some children have more/less crayons than the others?
- Have children prepare a signup sheet for outdoor play. Who will ride on the swing first, second, third... or on the slide or ride on the bikes? How will they take turns? Can they develop signup sheets for other days too?
- At the end of the day, the teacher could hold a “good bye” session. Each day, one child should be encouraged to tell about something that happened at the pre-school. What happened? Was it a problem or not? How did the child deal with the situation? Are there other ways to deal with this situation?
- Use any naturally occurring problem situations as learning tools for children using the strategy outlined above.

Storytelling

- Share stories of where children/animals/characters have had disagreements, arguments and conflicts. Use these to show strategies for negotiating and resolving difficulties and accommodating different perspectives.
- Find interesting stories that show how children have been creative problem solvers. There are lots of stories of children solving treasure hunts or mysteries or overcoming obstacles. Read the stories to children and encourage them to brainstorm on how they would solve these problems.
- Have children tell their own stories about problems they faced and how they solved them...sometimes it is as simple as being able to tie their own shoes...
Persona dolls/puppets

- Persona doll is very unhappy. Every time she goes to play with the blocks, other children come and take some away and she cannot build her big, big tower. What is she supposed to do?
- Persona doll is very cross. She is happy riding on the swing and doesn’t want to get off. But Sara wants her to get off NOW!!!
- Persona doll is very happy; she has found a way to have lots of books to read. Do you know how she got so many books?

Music and Movement

- Children hold hands in a circle and without letting go they make a twister tangle by going in and out under each other’s arms. They then try to undo the twister tangle without letting go of hands.
- Give children opportunities to make up dance steps stomping their feet, twirling their hands, going round in circles and other fun dance steps. Have them work in small groups to put together their own dance. Let each group demonstrate their dancing technique to the other. How are they similar and how do they differ?

Games

- Ask the children to form a line from the shortest to the tallest child without talking or measuring each other.
- Have a large bowl of water and some plastic beakers or cups. Get the children to guess how many beakers they will need to hold the full amount of water. Ask the children to pour the water into the beakers to see which child guessed the right amount or nearly the right amount.
- Ask the children to sit in a circle around the table or on their knees on the floor and put their hands in front of them. Each child should put the right hand between two hands of the child sitting on his right side and the left hand between the hands of the child sitting to the left of him/her. Help them arrange their hands in such a way that between two hands of each child are two hands from the children sitting next to him/her. When all hands are positioned, one child should make a simple movement with one hand. The movement should be repeated by the hand next to it and then the hand next to the second one... until every other hand in a circle, one by one has repeated the movement.
Child Focus

Sometimes things happen in our lives that are hard, that can make us feel sad, worried or afraid. At times like this we all need someone we can turn to who helps us to feel safe and protected. When we know that there are people who love and care for us, it helps us to feel strong again.

Adult Focus

Many children grow up in conditions of adversity and hardship. However there are many children who have the capacity to prevent, minimize or even overcome the consequences of adversity. Factors that have been linked with resiliency in young children include the availability of trusted and caring adults and relationships, a child’s sense of his/her own accomplishments, purpose, and self esteem, the child’s own genetic make-up and temperament (i.e. personal vulnerabilities to anxiety, mental health problems), and having people in their lives who demonstrate unconditional love.

We can enhance resilience in children by being caring, supportive, and loving role models for children. We can and should help children to acknowledge their own skills and capacities to make a positive difference in the classroom or at home which builds their self-esteem, confidence and agency. Through listening, support, guidance, confidence building and allowing children to be empowered actors children will be able to be active participants in their environment and this can enhance resilience.

You have the right to be treated equally no matter who you are, where you live, what your race or religion is or whether you are a boy or a girl. *UNCRC Article 2*

**Questions for discussion**

- Who do you go to when you need help?
- Are there other people who can help you and support you?
- Who makes you feel safe?
- Who helps you to understand what is “right” and what is “wrong?”
- Who sets the rules for you? What kinds of rules must you follow?
- Do you like trying out new things and activities? How do you feel if something doesn’t go the way you want it to?
- How can we deal with things when they aren’t exactly how we want them to be?
- Can you tell me two things you enjoy doing?
- What kinds of things are you good at doing?
- What kinds of things would you like to learn?
Discussion/Language/Communication Activities

- Teacher can use a puppet to share feelings and experiences with. The puppet tells her that sometimes she is afraid of things happening around her. But she always goes to her mummy or grandfather who helps her. She wants to know what other children do when they are afraid. Who helps them?

- Have each child talk to the puppet (or whisper in the puppet’s ear) what they do when they are afraid or upset. If a child does not want to speak he/she can pass the puppet on to the next child.

- Children can talk about their families, events happening around them, things happening in the school. What did they do to deal with the situation?

- Another activity would be to have the puppet tell them a story about a big rain storm. It shook the house. She was scared. But she remembered that mummy and daddy were in the other room. So she went to them and they all went around the house together to make sure all the windows were shut, the doors locked, and then they all sat together and told stories to each other. She even told her parents a funny joke (have a joke ready)!!

- Ask the children to share similar experiences they had when they were able to respond and act in a difficult circumstance…what did they do? Encourage their responses and have them think of other ways to respond in these difficult circumstances…someone is fighting, there is a big storm, someone gets lost, etc.

Storytelling

- This is a good opportunity to bring in community members who have been through difficult situations. They can talk about these situations and how they and their children managed.

- Find stories that talk about children who have been able to solve problems and deal with hardships. After reading the story, find what kinds of skills and activities these children had that allowed them to be helpful or to help solve problems. Most times, this includes calling someone to help, or being able to read directions, or helping younger children, or sitting quietly and waiting for parents to come home.

- Pick out stories where children are very active in exploring their environments. Allow children to choose stories to be read. This allows children to feel in control and
decisions. The more children feel empowered to act positively, the more resilience they are likely to have.

- Facilitate children creating their own storybook - 5 things I can do and 5 things I want to learn how to do - acknowledging and appreciating their own skills and thinking about how they can act in the future is part of building resilience.

- Discuss with the children how pets/animals around them also need hugs, patting, talking to etc and how they come to those they trust most among humans for comfort and protection when they feel unsafe e.g. at times of lightning, thunder, storms or loud noises and how afterwards they feel strong and safe again.

**Art Activities**

- Ask children to draw pictures of people or events that are important in their lives. Ask them to tell you about these persons, places and events. Ask the child what he/she was doing or thinking at the time that these events took place.

- Write captions on the children’s paintings and drawings about what they are telling you in their words. When writing the captions, help the child to clarify what they were thinking or feeling. For example, if the child says, “I was all alone…” the adult could ask, “How did you feel when you were left all alone?” Help the child to express his/her feelings through the pictures and what they have to say. Do not challenge their experiences.

- Ask children to draw pictures where they were happy and eager to be doing something. What are their favourite activities? Who do they enjoy being with? How do they like to spend their time? Ask the child to explain to you what is happening in the picture. Write down what the child has to say. Point out when the child is in control. “So you enjoyed taking your brother for a walk around the house?” “You knew exactly what to do when it was raining and you had to go inside and get warm.” Encourage their positive behaviours and actions where they took the initiative.

**Persona dolls/puppets**

- Use the persona dolls/puppets to talk about how sometimes they don’t know what to do, but then use their heads to decide what is good and what might be dangerous.

- Have the persona dolls speak about times when they are confused or
scared and aren’t sure exactly what they should be doing. Then she/he seeks out her mummy or daddy or someone very important to them to get their support and protection.

• The persona doll enjoys giving hugs and getting hugs…it feels good to be loved. Who loves you? (Get children to speak about who they love and who loves them. This is a good exercise to help identify children who may have problems in their home care environment).

• The persona doll/puppet has a problem and she wants the children to listen to her problem and help her solve it…she is being bullied on the way home from school, someone is hurting her and sometimes she feels very lonely….  

• Children can give their solution to the problem and listen to the solutions of other children.

• The persona doll/puppet tells the children that sharing our feelings and thoughts with others is good. We can help each other solve problems. We should always seek out help from those we trust and love.

Creative/imaginary play

• Imagine you are in a jungle. You hear lots of noises around you. You are walking with a group of children and your teacher. What are you going to do? Here the teacher can help children to imagine what kinds of animals might be out there…is it a lion or a cat, a dog or a wolf? Even in the jungle, we can try to be safe by staying with the group, following the adult and listening well.

• A storm blew throughout the night. When you awaken you find that everything has moved and things are quite dirty. What can you do? Imagine you are picking up the mess. Who does what? What tools will you need? How can you fix things? Who could help you?

• Children can role-play jobs and roles that they see as strong important jobs and talk about why these jobs are so important for children or for adults; eg doctors/nurses or village leader that makes sure everyone has food or a home.

Dance/Music

• Expose the children to different kinds of music; very fast and lively music, music that is very soothing, music that is fun to sing to. Have the children choose which kinds of music they want to listen to. Allow them to listen to that music. Then put on very soothing music. Have them close their eyes and think of peaceful scenes such as green fields with flowers, the big ocean,
Activities to do in the setting

lots of trees, a playground. Take deep breaths, close your eyes and relax. How do you feel now?

- Music demonstrating storms or winds could be used with children to get them to experience how they felt or how trees would be pushed and pulled into different directions and then when the calm comes, the tree is able to stand tall and straight again. Similar music related to strong waves and floating/drifting without support and then what happens when the waves return to smooth calm waters.

Games

- Simon Says...allow children to take turns giving instructions to others. Let them be in control and be decision makers.
- Teacher for the day. Assign a child as your assistant every day. The child is allowed to help you decide on the kinds of activities the children will do and help you in the classroom. This new role allows the child to feel wanted and needed. It also gives the child a sense of leadership and control. Ensure that all children get a turn.

You have a right to a voice and opinion. You have a right to say what you think and feel and for adults to listen to you.  *UNCRC Article 12*

You have the right to feel safe and protected.  *UNCRC Article 19*
Child focus

Children live surrounded by adults and sometimes other children, who love them and take care of them. This is what makes a family.

Adult focus

(It is critical that the adult is sensitive to the individual family situation of the child).

Children grow up in different family types and in diverse communities. Relationships are among the most important experiences that young children have and they have a particularly strong influence on their social and emotional functions. A child’s experiences in the early years also significantly effect the development of the human brain. In times of conflict, families can be separated and this circle of care for the child may be broken. Supportive families, safe communities, adult mentors and caring teachers are what young children need to feel a sense of belonging and connection. It is important to build a sense of community in an early years setting/school and to help young children to express their feelings, learn to be compassionate, find creative ways to resolve conflict and respect diversity. Early years education builds on family education, and children will feel more confident and positive about themselves when parents/carers and practitioners/teachers work together in an atmosphere of mutual respect.
You have a right to live in a family who cares for you. *UNCRC Article 9*

**Example questions for discussion:**

- Can you tell us about where you live and who you live with?
- Do you have brothers or sisters?
- Do you have grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins?
- What things do you like to do with your family or the people you live with?
- Where are some of the places you like to go to in your community and why?
- How can we help to make our communities better places to play and live in?
- How can we show our family/people we live with that we care about them?
- What do you like about coming to your pre-school/school?
- What are your favourite activities in your pre-school/school?
- Is there anything about pre-school/school you don’t like?
- Do you have good friends at pre-school/school?
- How can we show our friends at pre-school/school that we care for them?
- What sorts of things can we do in pre-school/school to make it a good place for everyone?
Discussion/Language/Communication Activities

• Ask children to describe what it feels like to be with their family and to do things with the family.
• Discuss with children the kinds of events that happen in their communities, e.g. celebrations, how different members of their family and community have different roles in making celebrations/festivals enjoyable for everyone.
• Have discussions with children about a time when they helped someone within their family, community, at pre-school etc, how did it feel? How did it make the other person feel?
• Have discussions with children around helpful and hurtful behaviours and how these behaviours make us feel.
• Have discussions with children around the rules and the boundaries in the setting. Involve them in creating these. Children are much more likely to comply to rules they have agreed to rather than rules that are enforced on them.
• Have discussions with the children about their roles and tasks within the home setting, what do the adults and/or children do? Why is it shared in this way?

Storytelling

• Tell stories and get the children to develop their own stories about:
  • families but be aware of the different family types that children in your setting are part of. It is important not to portray one family type as better than another.
  • about helpful and hurtful behaviours.
  • about places in the community, going to the shops, going to the park, going to get the firewood or the water, looking after the cows or sheep or goats, going to the pre-school, school etc.
  • about different festivals in the community.

Art Activities

• Children can draw pictures of their families.
• Children can paint or draw places they go to in their communities.
• Children can make a community map by drawing or cutting out pictures of places in the community e.g. shops, places of worship, parks, play areas, hospitals, fields etc.
• Children can bring in photographs of their families and make a collage to display. Practitioners can write captions below the photographs of
what children have said about their families.

• Children can make ‘family books’ showing the family in different times from the child’s birth to the present day: drawings, photos and comments can be added by family members, favourite rhymes or songs etc.

Persona dolls/puppets

• Persona dolls can be used to talk about their family experiences, going to granny’s house, playing with brothers, sisters, cousins, getting into conflict with someone, how this was solved etc.

• Persona dolls can talk about their experiences in the community, where they like to go and who they like to go with, people in the community who help them etc.

• Persona dolls can be used to engage children in discussions about their experiences in the early years setting.

Dance/Music

• Play music that children are likely to hear in their communities and let them dance to it.

• Dancing with partners or in small groups can encourage cooperation.

• Children can create a band which means cooperating with and playing instruments at certain times to create a good sound.

• Children can make musical instruments out of junk and/or local materials.

• Children can celebrate traditional festivals.

Creative/imaginary play

• Provide resources to enable children to role-play families being a mummy, daddy, brother, sister, looking after a baby etc. Interact with children to extend their knowledge and understanding of these roles in a playful way.

Games

• Play games that require cooperation and team work.

• Let the children make a collage that requires them to work together, share ideas, share resources etc.
The Context in which Practitioners Work

Photo Courtesy of ITASC, Lebanon
The context in which early years practitioners work - the external ecological environment

As an adult working with or caring for children, the most important area of influence is your direct work with the children and families. However, adults working with children must also be aware of the wider context of children’s lives and how this impacts on their development. While the programme provides tools for creating a peaceful culture in the educational setting, a different reality often exists outside of the educational setting. An important role of educators is to respond and mediate real events that children are exposed to on an ongoing basis. This is particularly important in conflict and post conflict societies.

Below are some of the key questions relating to the external ecological environment beyond the microsystem of the early years setting that practitioners should regularly consider:

- In what ways does the culture of our country impact on young children?
- In what ways does the conflict impact on young children? In what ways are the specific needs of young children being addressed/not addressed in peace building measures?
- In what ways do government policies impact on young children?
- What impact is the state of the economy having on young children and their families?
- Are the rights of young children being impacted by the culture, policies and economic situation and political stability of the country?
- Can early years practitioners and early years organisations positively influence policies for early childhood development and the realisation of children’s rights?
- Do we have strong early years networks that make the needs and rights of young children visible and support our work with children and families?
- Are there appropriate training opportunities to support me to work with young children in conflict and post conflict situations?
Beyond the Early Years Setting - Examples of ECD practice engaging with the broader ecology of the child’s social world

In order to illustrate the impact of the ecological systems beyond the early years setting, we have drawn examples from the mapping of ECD programmes around the world. These show positive ways that practitioners have engaged with systems of governance, the media and research in order to effect positive change in children’s lives.

Effecting Change at the level of Culture and Governance - examples from Chad, Northern Ireland, Serbia and Israel

Chad

The culture in some countries may be patriarchal and gender inequality may be a real problem. In Chad, necessity and shortages resulted in the recruitment of both male and female Animators, working together. The teams represented a previously taboo situation in this Muslim region where gender segregation for workers had been the norm. Similarly children in the schools which were developed were not segregated by gender.

Lobbying was also carried by early years practitioners and stakeholders to influence government policy on:

- orphans and vulnerable children affected by HIV/AIDS;
- outlawing child labour;
- protection of children against sexual abuse and commercial exploitation;
- gender issues.

At central government level, new draft bills were prepared to reform the penal and labour codes, outlawing the worst forms of child labour. A national policy on early care and education was developed with discussions around the development of a civil code and attention to programmes aimed at curbing violence in schools.

Northern Ireland

Although the peace process has been in operation for almost 15 years, the legacy of the violence has, understandably, left the country deeply divided. Protestants and Catholics tend to live in segregated communities and children go to segregated schools. Even sports and social events tend to be segregated in Northern Ireland with families and communities celebrating different events.

Early Years – the organisation for young children in Northern Ireland developed the Media Initiative for Children Respecting Difference Programme aimed at young children aged from 2-7 years old to support them in developing positive attitudes to difference. This programme, which is evidence-based, has attracted funding from the government to enable practitioners and teachers in early years settings and schools to implement the programme.
Serbia

After three years of lobbying in Serbia by early years organisations, efforts to make the relevant State bodies aware of the extent of the problem of non-registered children reached several local, central and international organisations including the Ministry of Education and Interior who understood both that the legislation had to be changed and the fact that there were many people (both children and adults) who physically existed but legally were non-existent and had to be dealt with.

Israel

“Hand in Hand” is a network of bi-lingual multi-cultural schools for Arab and Jewish children. Hand in Hand education extends beyond the walls of the classroom: it is a family and community venture. The schools host programs that promote coexistence, including lectures, film series, Arabic language classes, dialogue groups, and seasonal and holiday events; these are open to parents and the wider public.

Whereas most schools in Israel are segregated, Hand in Hand’s three public schools educate Jewish and Arab children - Muslims, Jews, Christians and Druze, together in the same classrooms. Jewish and Arab staff work together to teach tolerance, respect and coexistence. Children from age four learn both Hebrew and Arabic from teachers speaking their native tongues. Children learn to live with difference, complexity and even contradiction. They develop the ability to be flexible, solve problems, make themselves heard and listen respectfully to others.

School steering committees include representatives from local volunteer organizations and municipal governments, ensuring a flow of information and ideas from the school to the wider community and vice versa. This example proves to policy makers that co-existence is possible.

Effecting Change at the Level of the Media - examples from Northern Ireland, Chad, Nepal, Palestine Iraq and Lebanon

(Also see practitioners support materials on the media).

The media has a strong influence on children’s lives. Often this can have a negative impact as children absorb violence and may act this out. We need to ask some of the following questions:

- What are the children in your setting absorbing from the media?
- How does this impact on them?
- How are young children portrayed in the media?
- In what ways are early childhood organisations using or influencing the media?
- How is the media portraying the conflict in our country/region?
- Is the media supporting a culture of respect for difference?
- Have we developed relationships with key media personnel?
Northern Ireland

Cartoon media messages to address inclusion and diversity are shown on national television three times a year for a three week period to give support and recognition to the Media Initiative for Children Respecting Difference Programme in Northern Ireland. All forms of media, including radio and newspapers, are also used to promote the programme to the wider community, policy makers and funders.

Iraq

Regular radio broadcasting is carried out to raise awareness of the need for safe zones for young children in Iraq.

Nepal

The media was used to highlight the plight of young children in Nepal, with 573 new items appearing in newspapers between January 2001 and December 2003. Pamphlets were produced and distributed, showing the ten key resolutions that were agreed.

Lebanon

A Media Workshop was organised in Lebanon regarding the recruitment of children as child soldiers and 2000 posters and 1000 bookmarks produced highlighting the plight of safeguarding children.

Chad

When the refugee situation within eastern Chad was picked up by the western media, humanitarian aid began to flow in and the conditions of the general population came to the attention of international aid agencies.

Palestine

The East Jerusalem Early Childhood Resource Centre initiated a project entitled “Utilizing and Activating Media for Promoting and Spreading Children’s Rights." A large number of Palestinian media personal who were working on television, radio, newspapers and magazines engaged in a number of training activities that aimed to enhance the capabilities of the Palestinian media to reflect positively children’s rights issues and to become active agents at promoting these rights. The project also trained 60 children ages 12-17 years to become “media children.”
Effecting Change through Research and Evaluation - examples from Nepal, Colombia, Iraq and Northern Ireland

How do we know that what we do is making a difference?

(Also see practitioners support materials on monitoring and evaluation).

It is important that we evaluate the impact of our work with young children. In situations of conflict we need to support children to feel safe and help them to express their emotions. We also often need to challenge and change attitudes and behaviours towards those who are different.

There are a number of evaluation methodologies which can be employed to evaluate the impact of our work. These include:

- Observation and documentation of children.
- Becoming a reflective practitioner.
- Qualitative case studies.
- Process evaluations.
- Most significant change approach.
- Pre and post programme questionnaires.
- Participative evaluation techniques.
- Appreciative enquiry.

Early years practitioners can be the creator, researcher and critic of their own practice. In this way they can see and show evidence that what they are doing is making a difference. In the same ways that they observe and document children’s learning, they can also observe and document children’s emotional development, their developing sense of identity and their attitudes to others.

Occasionally you may be part of larger externally funded research and evaluation initiatives which may include:

- Randomised Controlled Trials
- Cross over designs
- Country Situational Analyses
- Longitudinal Studies

Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, the Media Initiative for Children Respecting Difference Programme has been the subject of a large Randomised Controlled Trial which was carried out more than four years after the programme had been developed for pre-school children.

The trial took place during the academic year 2008/09. Pre-testing was undertaken in September/October 2008 and the post-tests were conducted in May/June 2009. At both time points, children were tested individually and asked to complete a series of standardised tasks in which they were shown a variety of pictures and photographs and asked to identify and describe what they saw. Parents and practitioners were asked to complete questionnaires at both pre-test and post-test stages that consisted of a series of questions and statements that respondents were required to indicate
their response to on a Likert scale. The outcomes tested and the findings from the trial are reported below.

Overall, the research found strong and robust evidence that the Media Initiative for Children is effective in:
• improving outcomes in young children in relation to their socio-emotional development;
• raising awareness of and developing positive attitudes towards cultural differences.

The learning from this research has been used to:
• develop the programme further and make it available to younger and older age groups.
• influence funders and policy makers.
• leverage further funding for further roll-out of the programme.

Nepal

The Resource Centre for Early Childhood Development has conducted research on the effects of conflict on young children and has disseminated the results to advocate for children and families. A Journal of Early Childhood Development was produced to help provide guidance to those working with young children.

Colombia

CINDE is an educational research and development centre, based in Colombia, with local, national and international projection. CINDE has been working through the universities in Colombia to develop leaders who understand the nature of support and healing in the early years. To earn postgraduate qualifications, students undertake community projects and are involved in the research and evaluation as well as participating in the processes for formulating and implementing policies and programmes.

Iraq

A small descriptive, non intervention evaluation to access the extent of problems and causes was carried out, assessing who was most affected, when, where and how. Evaluation of the teacher training programme was carried out using pre and post tests to measure the increase in teachers’ knowledge. Evaluations were used to improve the quality of the training.

Building Capacity

Working with young children in conflict and post conflict regions is complex and specialized training will undoubtedly help practitioners in this work.

There is a need for those working in the field to have access to study the design and implementation of programmes, policies and research methods orientated to children and their significant adults in conflict and post conflict situations.
Introduction to the Support Materials for Practitioners’ Professional Development

These support materials have been developed to provide practitioners with further guidance and opportunities for professional development. The support materials give suggestions for consideration and reflection when working with young children around peace building.

The support guidance looks at the following areas:

- Listening to young children
- Helping young children to express feelings and emotions
- Using persona dolls/puppets to address issues
- Working with families
- Working with communities
- Using the media to advocate for young children
- Monitoring the effect of programmes
Listening to young children – the voice of the child

Listening to young children is part of the Child’s Right to Participation - one of the child rights principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Young children communicate many things in their daily lives in many different ways, for example their feelings, viewpoints and preferences. It is important to create a culture of active listening, especially in situations of conflict where children’s views are often overlooked. Active listening means really observing and hearing the messages that the child is trying to communicate and acting upon it if appropriate.

Listening to children promotes respectful adult-child relationships and this challenges us to reflect on how we engage with young children and how we listen to what they are telling us and how we act upon what we hear.

Recognising children’s many languages

- Children may not be able to speak due to trauma, developmental delay, special needs or disability
- Children do not always have the vocabulary to articulate their views
- Children have a hundred languages and use a range of strategies to communicate and express themselves such as their behaviour, creative play and art

The benefits of actively listening to children

- Active listening shows respect
- Active listening helps us get to know what is going on in a child’s head and gives us a clearer understanding of the world of the young child, therefore helping us to improve our practices and services for young children
- Active listening provides opportunities for children to voice their concerns, needs and experiences particularly in situations of conflict
- Active listening is the first step to solving problems
- Active listening is important for supporting a child’s development, inclusion, safety, health and well-being
• Active listening is important for fostering positive relationships between adults and children and for building strong competent children.

Some practical tips for creating a culture of active listening

• Build honest and trustful relationships with the young children so they feel comfortable to express their feelings.
• Ensure you create opportunities for listening to young children.
• Listen to children if you want children to listen to you.
• Develop strategies to let children know you are listening to them, such as use of body language, eye contact, nodding the head, repeating what you have heard.
• Observation is a key skill for listening to young children.
• Look for warning signs if a child seems unhappy and is reluctant to talk. It may be that something is wrong and he/she wants to tell you something but does not know how.
• Listen well before acting; it may take a while for the child to express what is really worrying them.
• Let children’s ideas lead to planning and new activities and seek their opinions and solutions to their problem.
• Encourage the use of the creative arts, such as painting, drama, story telling, puppets, music and dance to provide opportunities for children to express themselves.
• Engage with parents to understand their child’s ways of communicating and interests. Actively listen to parents and provide them with strategies to actively listen to their own children.
How to help children to express feelings and emotions using the feelings cube

Adults play a major role in children’s ability to identify, understand and express feelings and emotions in a healthy way. Children can fluctuate from one emotion to another and have difficulty understanding, naming and expressing their emotions.

Young children depend heavily on adults to help them name, express and regulate their feeling and emotions. Developing children’s ability to understand, recognise and express their and other’s emotions (emotional intelligence) in their early years is crucial.

Children who have a strong foundation in emotional intelligence can cope with conflict and problems better and engage in less self destructive behaviour than children who do not have a strong foundation. These children will be less impulsive and more focused.

In order to help young children, it is important we are aware of our own emotional intelligence.

Raising our own emotional intelligence

- The adult’s own level of emotional intelligence is by far the most important factor in creating an environment where emotional intelligence can be developed constructively with children
- Children learn to label their emotions by having healthy emotional expression modelled for them by adults
- Adults need to be aware of how they express their own emotions, especially negative emotions
- An effective adult is largely one who can express their negative emotions in an open and constructive way
• It is also important for the adults to be curious and wonder what is it like to be that child or a parent in a particular situation
• It is important to the child and family to know that you are there to support them in whatever situation they find themselves in

Helping children to develop emotional intelligence

• Sharing feelings can help create a sense of security and trust
• Set a good example by expressing your feelings in a positive way. For example, if you spill something you may say, “That is frustrating, I will just have to take a deep breath and start again”
• If something good has happened to you, you should say, “I feel proud that I achieved that”
• Acknowledge children’s feelings, for example “I see you are feeling sad today”
• Describe the body language associated with feelings and emotions, for example “you are frowning and looking down at the floor”
• Praise a child when he/she expresses their feelings through words for example “I am really glad you shared your feelings with me”
• Help the child name the feeling they are experiencing, for example “I would feel sad if that happened to me”
• After helping the child to recognise and express their emotions, it is important to give them strategies to cope with any negative emotions. For example when you are feeling angry, scribble hard on a page, hammer the pegs, plod the dough, breathe slowly until you feel calmer

Examples of activities that promote emotional intelligence

• Use persona dolls/puppets to help children express their feelings
• Puppets/dolls can express their feelings through adults which in turn can help children to express feelings and develop strategies for coping with negative emotions
• Read stories about feelings and emotions
• Use the feelings cube in your pack to help children learn the body language associated with emotions. Point out how the images show the faces are red when they are angry etc
• Use circle/group time to talk about feelings such as “I feel happy (angry, sad, confused) when……….”
• It is important to end group discussions about feelings on a positive note, for example making new friends, learning new skills, experiencing helpful/caring behaviour
• Drawing can help a child express feelings and emotions. Also using real photographs of feelings and emotions can reflect a child’s experiences, culture and environment
• Providing opportunities for imaginative play can enable children to act out feelings
Using persona dolls/puppets with young children

Persona dolls/puppets offer a non-threatening, effective and child-friendly way to foster emotional literacy and empower young children.

Persona dolls/puppets are special dolls/puppets with individual personalities, life experiences, likes and dislikes. Each doll/puppet has some kind of family unit and lives in a community.

The persona dolls/puppets tell the children about their good, and not so good experiences and can be used to explore a lot of issues with young children. This is done through the adult and with the adult using their own voice.

Some important points to consider when introducing persona dolls/puppets into the early years setting

• The personas of the dolls need to reflect the children in the group
• Where all the children in the group are from the same ethnic or cultural background and have no disabilities etc, it is important to introduce dolls that reflect diversity
• Once they decide on the identity of the persona doll, it is important that this stays the same

• The dolls are brought to life by the adult
• The dolls become small friends that the children identify with
• The dolls and their stories support the children in expressing their feelings and problem solving
• The dolls support the children to reflect on their experiences
• The dolls can help the children to deal with their anxieties and fears
• It is important to have an equal mix of boy and girl dolls

Areas and issues that can be explored through persona dolls/puppets include:-

• Emotions - anger, sadness, fear, happiness
• Empathy
• Problem solving
• Unlearning prejudices
• Respect for difference and for others
• Listening to children’s voices
• Cultural diversity
• Children’s rights
• Identity and belonging
Some practical tips for using the doll/puppets with young children

- The adult acts as an interpreter for the dolls
- The adult is not the doll but speaks for the doll
- Speak in your everyday voice
- Tell the children that the doll has come to tell them about a particular experience or feeling
- Invite the children’s input
- Let the children do most of the talking
- The adult’s role is to facilitate the discussion
- Listen carefully and actively to the children’s contributions
- Support children when necessary by asking appropriate questions
- Encourage the children to name the doll’s feelings, listen to each other, think deeply and express their ideas
- Discussing feelings and ideas is more important than finding important solutions
- When bringing the doll to life keep the presentation short, informative and enjoyable
- The goal is to capture the children’s attention so they will be interested in what happens to the doll
- Briefly explain to the children that the dolls want to discuss something with them
- Ask leading questions and reflect back what the children are saying and pick up on the reactions of those children affected by the situation being discussed
- Offer support if they feel uncomfortable
- The ending of a story telling session needs to be short and simple
- There may not always be a perfect conclusion
- Weave in the children’s contributions especially those that match the aim of the story – what you hoped the children would take out of the story

Purchasing or making persona dolls/puppets

Persona dolls/puppets can be purchased, however if finances are an issue, the dolls could be made in your local community. For example, in the Western Cape in South Africa, persona dolls and their clothes are made by women as part of a rural income generation project. This project has developed skills and provides income in an area of high poverty.
Working with families

In order for work with young children to be effective, it is essential to work with parents. When practitioners and parents work together, the results have a positive impact on the child’s development and learning. Relationships need to be authentic, meaningful and respectful.

Benefits of working with families

• Children feel more confident and positive about themselves when parents/carers and practitioners work together in an atmosphere of mutual respect
• Parents/carers know their child best
• What parents/carers do at home with children has the most significant effect on their emotional, social and intellectual development
• Parents/carers can enhance their child’s development whatever their social background
• What a parent/carer does is more important than the status of the parent/carer
• The impact is evident across all social groups and ethnic backgrounds

Some practical tips for working with families

• Engage in regular two way communications
• Build parents’ confidence on what they already do and support them to build on that
• Avoid making assumptions about parents
• Listen to parents as individuals and spend time getting to know family units. Value their views
• Ask parents what activities or information has been useful to them and what they would like more of
• Young children’s attitudes to diversity are influenced by the behaviour of the adults around them. All families should be welcomed and valued
• The smile that greets a parent sends a very important message that they are welcome
• Practitioners need to think about how they are reaching out to the family. We often hear about hard to reach parents/carers but practitioners need to do all they can to let families know they are there for them
• Staff should be flexible and be able to cope with the twists of everyday family life. If parents/carers need extra support particularly in situations of conflict, staff should have the resources and knowledge where to refer them
• Involve the parents/carers in how you are working with the children in peace building, in order that they are able to support the children in the home

Parents will feel valued if:

• They receive a warm and genuine welcome
• They do not see other parents being treated better than them
• Staff know their child well and have a genuine interest in them
• Staff share their expertise and support them in engaging with the child in the home
• Staff exchange information about their child regularly
• There is two way communication and parents feel listened to
Working with communities

Community development has been described as an approach that increases opportunities for people to participate, enables the transfer of skills, develops self reliance, ensures local ownership, and uses local resources to solve local issues.

Local communities, if given support, are capable of identifying for themselves the priorities for children and how to address them in situations of conflict and post conflict.

Benefits of the community development approach

- It has the potential to promote active participation of citizens and assuming responsibility for the best interests of the children
- Issues are identified by the communities themselves, rather than those perceived or imposed by external agencies
- The skills, knowledge and opinions of all members of the community are acknowledged in decision making and gives a voice to the marginalised groups (displaced people; refugees; victims of conflict; young children; women; stateless people…)
- Bringing children’s early years development into focus can help overcome conflicts within and between communities, therefore leading to greater cohesion
- Working with communities involves building trust, raising self esteem and the confidence of all members of the community
Some practical tips when working with communities

- Help them create safe spaces for children within the community
- Help them identify what already exists within communities and what is working well and how to build on the positive aspects rather than focusing on the problems within communities
- In post conflict situations, help them identify what projects and activities can be implemented that involve conflicting or divided communities
- Conversations can start small. A small group of parents can meet to share ideas about raising children in the community and protecting them
- It's about finding out what people care about and how they can commit to making changes
- Communities are in the best position to voice their own needs
- Start with small action steps and celebrate success to generate energy for positive change
Using the Media to advocate for children

The general public should be informed of the importance of investing in early childhood. The last few decades have witnessed a plethora of research and findings recommending that supporting the development of young children from birth is of crucial importance since this sets the foundations and parameters for learning, growth and development in the future.

Research findings show that the large percentage of the brain is built by the age of five. Providing children with proper health care, social development and positive and stimulating experiences and environments has a significant impact on the development of the child's brain. At no other period of time will the child experience such a tremendous growth and development spurt. Hence, investing in programmes and services that can enrich and support the young child's development has a long term impact on the child's physical, cognitive, social and emotional well being and allows them to become productive and healthy citizens and members of society and reduces the overall burden on welfare and rehabilitative programmes in the country.

Organisations that work with and for young children should become aware of all parties who are working directly and indirectly with young children. For instance, examine the government policy and programmes in health, education, social protection, culture and recreation to determine what kinds of activities and resources they are (or are not) allocating for young children.

Examples of ways early years organisations and practitioners can advocate for young children

- Prepare press releases on your work and share with the media. These press releases should be informative and stir public opinion on the importance of allocating more programmes to young children (either home or centre based and taking into consideration an interdisciplinary approach)
- Raise attention with the government on the importance of sharing their work and future anticipated actions with the public. This should include recommendations of why investing in young children is a priority for the government and how these types of early childhood interventions support
healthy development of the child and have long lasting benefits for all of society since these children are more likely to grow up to be productive, independent, and civic minded individuals who can contribute to the nation’s development and prosperity

- Contact universities and research centres. They should also be encouraged to share information on ongoing research and initiatives they are supporting around early childhood
- Identify credible spokespersons. Academics who have interesting findings on their work with young children should share their findings with the public in an easy to understand manner and clearly identify the implications of their findings on children’s development and long term well being
- Relate these results to studies conducted on: young children’s health and nutritional status; safety and protection measures; comparison of different types of nursery or pre-school services within the country; different types of curriculum and educational packages and children’s acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills
- Seek out a variety of different topics and issues within the early childhood sector in order to keep the media engaged. The media likes new stories and information that their readers or viewers will be interested in hearing about, as well as sensational news. Hence, the media officer should continually seek out new and interesting stories and present them through various news outlets such as television, radio, print, web based/ online forums
- Present information in a clear, concise and attractive manner. Since the topic is about children you should try to include pictures of them in various settings (ensure confidentiality and privacy or approval from parents in advance)
- Highlight negative outcomes. Cases of children who have been denied their rights to the most basic of services and care should be highlighted (ensure confidentiality and privacy) and the ramifications of these actions on the child’s overall development and well being should be noted
- Seek to engage the attention of decision and policy makers. Garnering support for expansion of early childhood programmes, increasing resource allocations, and raising standards within the sector should be key goals that you set for your media campaign. These types of media interventions can lead to greater interest and accountability of the government in mobilising support for early childhood
- Do not forget that it is also important to continue to use the media to pass on information to parents and other care providers on best practices when dealing with young children
- Prepare and disseminate information on how to care for young children through the various media outlets. Parents and care providers can be reached en masse with fun, stimulating, and innovative activities and information in a cost effective and efficient manner. This also serves to build up a pool of interested and engaged parents/caregivers who can later on be mobilised to lobby with the government for improved services, programmes and resources to target young children
How to monitor and evaluate the impact of peace building programmes

To understand if the programmes and activities that are provided for young children in conflict and post conflict situations are having an impact, practitioners need to monitor and evaluate their work.

Monitoring refers to the ongoing collection of information to assess the quality and changes in the experiences of children, their families and practitioners participating in a certain peace building activity or programme. Evaluation refers to the overall assessment of the impact of the particular activity or programme.

Things that can be monitored and evaluated

- changes in a child’s behaviour, attitudes, confidence and knowledge
- the progress and development of skills and knowledge in children
- practitioners’ own practice and attitudes towards respect for difference when working with children in conflict and post conflict situations
- the impact of self-reflection on our own attitudes, prejudices and behaviour

Some practical tips for evaluating children’s progress around peace building activities in the early years setting:

- Prior to introducing the peace building activities such as similarities and differences, expressing feelings and emotions, respect for difference, conflict resolution etc, you need to observe and record what the children know about these subjects already. Through what they say and through their actions with others, you will get an idea of their attitudes and abilities. These insights will become the baseline for building upon and monitoring the improvement in children’s behaviour or actions when faced with conflict
- As you start to build the peace building activities into the daily routine, e.g. differences and similarities, observe and record the children’s reactions and also reflect on the staff’s ability to work with the topics
• At the end of the first day of introducing the new theme, sit with the staff team and discuss the reaction of the children and how the team felt about talking or putting the activity into practice – where there any difficulties? Do the other members of staff think the activity was well received or was there no reaction or was there adverse reactions? What if anything would they change when they do the same activity again?
• Review with all the staff members their views and feelings on a regular basis
• On a regular basis re-evaluate the children’s progress and their interaction with others; has their cooperation and sharing improved; are there fewer arguments? Document the improvements and impact the activities are having on the children’s behaviour
• Allocate individual workers to observe a small number of children on a specific day: provide them with specific indicators to observe and evaluate related to playing together, sharing and conflict resolution. Has their engagement in the peace building activity had an impact on their interaction with others? At the end of the day, discuss the observations with all the staff members; has the activities on peace building or respect for diversity had an impact on the level of aggression in the setting; are children more caring of their peers; do they show compassion when another child is upset?
• Staff can hold sessions on their own practice to review their ability to carry out peace building activities with young children. How can staff support each other when having difficulties with their own feelings and behaviour? Is there a need for an external counsellor or training?
• Develop creative ways to get feedback from the children themselves about how they feel about the peace building activities
• Involve the parents in the monitoring and evaluation so that they feel part of the process and can provide feedback on their child’s development and any impact of the peace building activities
• Evaluation or assessment should begin with each child as he or she begins their attendance in the early years setting. Spend time getting to know the child, their personality, their family situation and their background in relation to any conflict
• Find out where the children are starting from. What is the level of their social and emotional development? Can they express their feelings? Are they aware of the feelings of others?
• You need to document the social and emotional development, abilities and skills of the children. This can be done through recording your observations of children’s interactions and ways of expressing themselves
• When implementing peace building activities, you need to set specific outcomes for the children
• You need to review each child’s progress on a regular basis. This can be done through observation, through activities, discussion with other workers, the child and the parents
Recommended Reading


Edited by Hopkins, S. Hearing Everyone’s Voice. Educating Young Children for Peace and Democratic Community: Published by Childcare Info Exchange


Humanitarian Practice Network Paper: The Role of Education in Protecting Children in Conflict


Paul Van Tangeren et al. (2005) People Building Peace. 11 Successful Stories of Civil Society: European Centre for Conflict Prevention


UNICEF Actions for the Rights of Children (ARC)


Books for using with children

The Feelings Book: The Care & Keeping of Your Emotions (American Girl Library) by Dr Lynda

One by Kathyrn Otoshi

Lots of Feelings (Shelley Rotner's Early Childhood Library)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feelings (Reading Rainbow Book)</td>
<td>Aliki</td>
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<td>Feelings to Share from A to Z</td>
<td>Peggy Snow and Todd Snow</td>
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<td>Making Friends Is an Art!</td>
<td>Julie Cooke</td>
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<td>Shades of People</td>
<td>Shelley Rotner</td>
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<tr>
<td>Making It Better: Activities for Children Living in a Stressful World</td>
<td>Shelia M Kelly</td>
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<tr>
<td>When I Care about Others (Way I Feel Books)</td>
<td>Cornelia Maude Spelman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Making Friends</td>
<td>Fred Rodgers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Talk and Work It Out (Learning to Get Along)</td>
<td>Cheri J. Meiners</td>
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<td>Listen and Learn (Learning to Get Along, Book 2)</td>
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<td>When I Feel Afraid (Learning to Get Along)</td>
<td>Cheri J. Meiners</td>
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<td>Accept and Value Each Person (Learning to Get Along)</td>
<td>Cheri J. Meiners</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understand and Care (Learning to Get Along, Book 3)</td>
<td>Cheri J. Meiners</td>
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Acknowledgements

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