

Children play at a UNICEF-supported, child-friendly space in a camp in Nowshera District, Pakistan.

# ECD KITS PROVIDE PLAYFUL LEARNING

Early Childhood Development Kits help children caught in crisis resume normal childhood activities

 **EXPERTS TELL US THAT EARLY LEARNING IS CRITICAL** to a child's long-term health and well-being.

That's why UNICEF recently created a first-of-its-kind Early Childhood Development (ECD) Kit devoted to encouraging continued development and social interaction among children aged 0-6 during and after a crisis.

Child survivors of weather-related disasters and children caught in conflict often end up in refugee camps, living in close quarters with few places to play. Since it is essential for children to resume normal activities without delay, even in an acute phase of an emergency, UNICEF sets up centres for these children, and the ECD Kit provides play things that they can use to learn.

Each of the kits prepared by UNICEF contains 37 different items to help create a safe learning environment for up to 50 children. Each item was selected to help develop skills for thinking, speaking and feeling, and to promote interaction

## Did you know?

An estimated 20 million children have been forced to flee their homes in recent years because of conflict and human rights violations, and are living as refugees in neighbouring countries or are internally displaced within their own national borders.



A child interacts with a psychologist at a UNICEF-supported, child-friendly space in a transit camp near the Libyan-Tunisian border.



Children race to pick up wooden blocks at a UNICEF-sponsored education session for internally displaced people in Man, Côte d'Ivoire.

between peers and with caregivers. Before it was launched, the kit was piloted in seven countries in crisis or post-crisis transition, including Chad, Iraq and Maldives.

“The materials—dominos, colouring pencils, construction blocks, hand puppets, puzzle blocks and memory games—also seem to give children a sense of property, something that they own,” said Deputy Director of Emergency Programs Dermot Carty. “Our experience in the field tells us that educational kits act as magnets to children.”

The ECD Kits piggyback on the huge success of UNICEF's School-in-a-Box kits (over 600,000 now delivered worldwide)

as well as our Recreation Kits that provide sporting equipment and resources to ensure physical activity and play.

UNICEF has been able to supply these kits to many of the more than 800 emergencies it has responded to in the past three years alone and, thanks to the generosity of our donors, children worldwide will continue to benefit from these innovative resources.

## Luisa's Story: Georgia



Luisa and her younger brother Giorgi watch intently as a caregiver builds a tower of multi-coloured bricks. They then run eagerly over to tables displaying puzzles, games, crayons and drawing books.

The past year has been a struggle for Luisa, one of the 127,000 people forced from their homes by fighting in South Ossetia, Georgia.

Every weekday Luisa and Giorgi's mother, Tamrik, takes her children to a centre established by UNICEF and its partners in an abandoned soviet military hospital in the Georgian capital of Tbilisi.

UNICEF's new ECD Kit, piloted here in Tbilisi, provides a semblance of normalcy for these children and helps ensure they don't fall behind developmentally.

Tamrik says the ECD Kit and the attendant caregivers in the centre provide much-needed support and a safe environment. “I think it plays an important role in the children's upbringing. They have gained a lot of experiences in terms of education and social skills.”

## Samia's Story: Libya



Samia is holding hands with other children as they move in a circle, singing songs in an early childhood centre in a tent at the Shousha transit camp near the Libyan-Tunisian border.

A month ago, Samia and her parents lived in Tripoli. Now they join 6,000 other Libyans in a sea of small tents that make up this refugee camp.

“Many children, when they arrive, are extremely quiet,” says Monira, a UNICEF volunteer, as she takes paper and colouring pencils out of an ECD Kit for a drawing session. “After a few days they start to draw, play games and sing, and they feel safer and more in control.”

Over 6,500 children in Libya, like Samia, are benefitting from activities supported by the UNICEF ECD Kits. Thanks to the generosity of donors like you, UNICEF is able to give these children a small respite from the ongoing conflict.