



**Playgroups for Children under Five Years:
A Guide for Volunteers**
2nd Edition

This report was produced by Global Communities Rwanda with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of Global Communities and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

USAID is a U.S. Government agency that works with the government of Rwanda to improve the health and livelihoods of Rwandans and increase the economic and political development.



USAID programs in the areas of health, economic growth, democracy and governance are made possible by the generous support of the American people.

The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) is the United States' initiative to combat the global HIV/AIDS epidemic. Launched in 2003, PEPFAR is the largest effort by any nation to combat a single disease. In Rwanda, PEPFAR supports voluntary counseling and testing activities, youth intervention programs, provides antiretroviral (ARV) drugs and treatment for opportunistic infections and supports education and life skills training for orphans and vulnerable children in Rwanda.



Global Communities is an international non-profit organization that works closely with communities worldwide to bring about sustainable changes that improve the lives and livelihoods of the vulnerable. Global Communities has been working in Rwanda since 2005 supporting communities to improve their livelihoods and working with Rwandan organizations to help strengthen their operations to provide services.



Acknowledgements

This 2nd Edition of the Playgroup Guide was revised by Global Communities, Rwandan Partner Organizations: Association des Eglises de Pentecote au Rwanda (ADEPR), Caritas-Rwanda, Duhamic-Adri, Icyuzuzo, Women's Equity in Access to Care and Treatment (WE-ACTx for Hope) and Women Investment Fund (WIF), community volunteers from Gakenke, Rulindo, Ruhango and Gasabo. It includes the ideas and experience of existing playgroups established throughout the world as well as the lessons from piloting this approach in Rwanda.

We are especially grateful for the detailed feedback and recommendations we received from the Rwandan playgroup volunteers and the parents from Gakenke, Ruhango and Gasabo who participated in the Focus Group Discussions.

The authors drew from the games and activities that were suggested by parents and playgroup volunteers and also from numerous publications, adapting existing materials and tools that reflect the Government of Rwanda policy and strategic plan for Early Childhood Development – please see bibliography.

Playgroups for OVC are made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

For more information, contact: info@globalcommunities.rw.

Global Communities Rwanda
Avenue de l'Umuganda
Kacyiru Nord, Plot 1091
PO BOX : 7820
Kigali, Rwanda

Table of Contents

Introduction to Playgroups	1
What are playgroups?	1
What are the benefits of playgroups?	1
How are playgroups organized?	2
What are the selection criteria for a playgroup volunteers?	3
What are the roles and responsibilities of a playgroup volunteers?	3
What is the role of the parents/guardians during the playgroups?	3
How is a playgroup site chosen?	4
What types of activities happen during playgroups?	4
How will I know that my playgroup is successful?	4
Stages and Types of Play	6
Overview of the Guide	8
Rationale for playgroups	8
Why was this guide developed?	9
How should you use this guide?	9
Managing a Playgroup	11
Sample agenda	11
Mobilizing parents and local authorities	12
Preparing the venue and setting up playgroup area	12
Running a playgroup session	12
Welcome & introductions	12
Warm up	13
Structured play	13
Free time – unstructured play	13
Closing words & good-byes	13
Clean up	13

Ideas for Warn-up Activities: Ages 2-5 years **15**

Activity 1: Singing In Numbers –“Number 1, Number 1 Where Are You?”	16
Activity 2: Dance and Stop	17
Activity 3: Clapping Hands	18
Activity 4: Story Telling Time	19
Activity 5: Waramutse Kazuba – Good Morning Mr.Sun	20
Activity 6: Poem – I Like Porridge	21
Activity 7: Our Five Senses	22

Ideas for Structured Play: Ages 2-4 years **24**

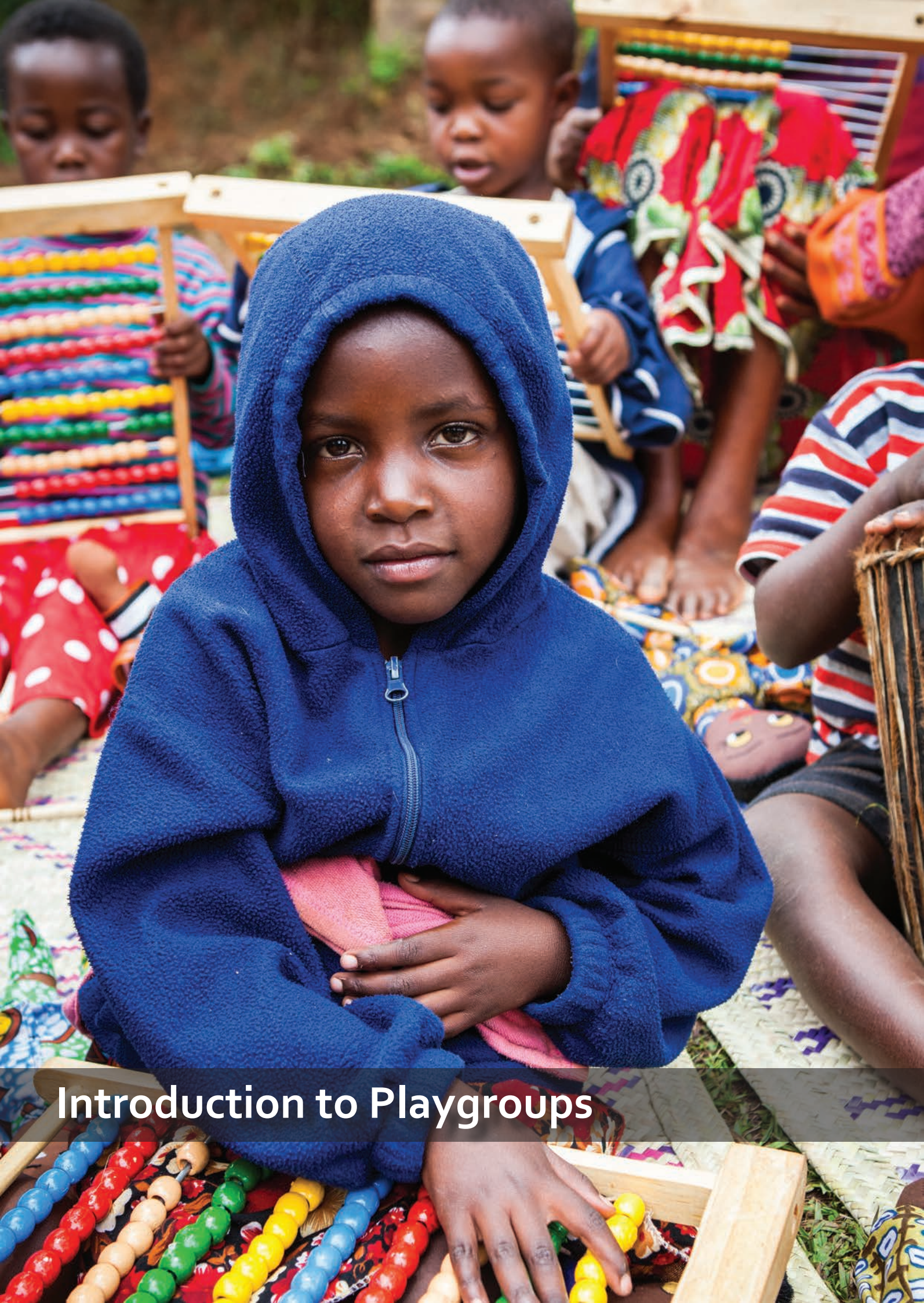
Activity 1: Simon Says	25
Activity 2: The Crow Catches the Chickens	26
Activity 3: The Fisherman – How High Will the Water Get?	27
Activity 4: Cloth of God’s Child	28
Activity 5: Body Parts	29
Activity 6: Clean Hands	30
Activity 7: Tall and Small	31

Ideas for Structured Play: Ages 5 and above **33**

Activity 1: The Stick Game	34
Activity 2: Follow the Shape	35
Activity 3: Chase the Horse’s Tail	38
Activity 4: Birds Fly	39
Activity 5: Over and Under Game	40
Activity 6: Grouping by Numbers	41
Activity 7: Sakwe Sakwe	42

Annex **43**

Bibliography	43
Additional Resources	43



Introduction to Playgroups



Introduction to Playgroups

What are playgroups?

A playgroup is a gathering of children and parents/guardians that promotes the emotional and physical development of young children through structured and unstructured play. Although each group is led by trained volunteers, parents/guardians play an important role as they explore new ways of engaging and supporting their children.

Playgroups usually last 1-2 hours and can be organized at anytime and in any place that is safe for children. We recommend that each playgroup meet at a regular time, i.e., once per week, in order to maximize the benefits of this approach.

What are the benefits of playgroups?

Play is essential for a child's development. Through play children develop life skills, social skills and motor skills. Children learn also cognitive thinking and build relationships with others. All children (OVC and non-OVC) benefit from playgroups because they provide opportunities for children to play and have fun in a safe environment. In addition, the program can identify children who may need additional support and provide appropriate referrals.

Every child benefits from playgroups because through play, children:

- Develop language and socialization skills.
- Learn to communicate emotions.
- Become creative and solve problems.
- Build their self-confidence.
- Learn how to get along with others.
- Better understand their culture and social norms.

“Playgroup has been a fantastic opportunity for my kid and myself. I love that my kid gets to play with other kids and learn new skills, like sharing, counting and singing.”
—Parent from MUSAMO playgroup site, Ruhango District

Play can be especially important for orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) because the physical and emotional trauma they face makes them more vulnerable to sadness and poor health. In addition, when vulnerable and non-vulnerable children come together, we can help to reduce stigma and discrimination against OVC, while providing opportunities for children to play and have fun in a safe and supportive environment.

Finally, the parents also learn new ways to support and stimulate their child’s development. The importance and need for play is not widely known in Rwanda and playgroups can play an important role in promoting and modeling new behaviors for parents – thus promoting behavior and social change.

How are playgroups organized?

Prior to the establishment of the playgroups, Rwanda Partner Organizations working in that sector meet with local authorities, school directors, religious leaders, community health workers, and other key stakeholders working with OVC to talk about your playgroup, and the benefits of play. Seek their input and support in referring families for this service, and increasing awareness in the community about the benefits of play. Once the playgroup activities have started, ask them to make announcements during religious services, or community gatherings like Umuganda to maximize awareness.

Experiences gathered from the playgroup pilot phase have shown that for playgroup to be successful the following needs to be considered:

- Work with local authorities (village and cell and sector leaders) in mobilizing parents, securing safe places for the playgroup venues and selecting volunteers to lead the playgroups.
- Involve parents/guardians in managing playgroups activities like leading some of the games and songs and also in managing small groups.
- Meet with parents if possible on quarterly basis to give feedback on the progress of playgroup activities.

What are the selection criteria for a playgroup volunteers?

In consultation with parents and local authorities, the most suitable people to organize and lead the playgroup should meet the following criteria:

- Responsible, mature and well-respected in the community.
- Demonstrates love for children and genuine interest in their well-being and development.
- Aware of child safety and protection.
- Patient, kind and understanding.
- Able to lead group discussions and activities – for adults and children.
- Lives in the community in which the playgroup is organized.
- Available and interested in volunteering.

What are the roles and responsibilities of a playgroup volunteers?

The Volunteers are the actual leaders of the playgroup. They are responsible for:

- *Making sure the play area is safe.* Children must feel comfortable and excited about learning through play.
- *Informing the families of the children.* Parents and guardians of vulnerable children may need additional encouragement and reminders about the date and time of the playgroup sessions.
- *Preparing and maintaining playgroup toys.* The toys should be kept in a clean and safe place to avoid loss and spoiling.
- *Selecting all Playgroup activities.* Prior to the playgroup session, the timetable and needed toys materials should be prepared.
- *Managing playgroup sessions.* The energy and organizational skills of the volunteers will often determine the success of the group. The families participating in the playgroups are eager for the guidance and encouragement of the volunteers.
- *Meet with kids who require special attention.* Some children may have additional needs because of delays in their emotional or physical development. Try to meet with those parents and children and provide them with additional encouragement and kindness. Where possible, try to refer them for additional services and support in the community.

What is the role of the parents/guardians during the playgroups?

The participation of parents/guardians during the playgroups is important, they help the volunteers to make sure the play area is safe, to select and support the playgroup activities and to clean up and put away the toys after each session. They are also expected to provide reassurance, encouragement and support to their children as they try out each new activity and game. Our hope is that parents/guardians, as they observe the children during and after the playgroups, will better understand the benefits of play and learn new ways to support their child's development through play.

How is a playgroup site chosen?

Each playgroup site needs to provide a safe, comfortable and nurturing environment for children and a comfortable space for parents as well. From experience, playgroups have been organized at ECE centers. However, if one does not exist in your community, please consider the following issues when you select your site:

- Easily accessible for parents and children.
- Spacious, yet enclosed (i.e., away from traffic, animals and large groups).
- Protection from rain and harsh weather.
- Access to water and toilet facilities.
- Clean and peaceful.

“My son can now mention all parties of the body in English at 3 years old. I think he will start primary school knowing all of the subjects studied in primary schools.”

—Parent from MUSAMO playgroup site,
Ruhango District

What types of activities happen during playgroups?

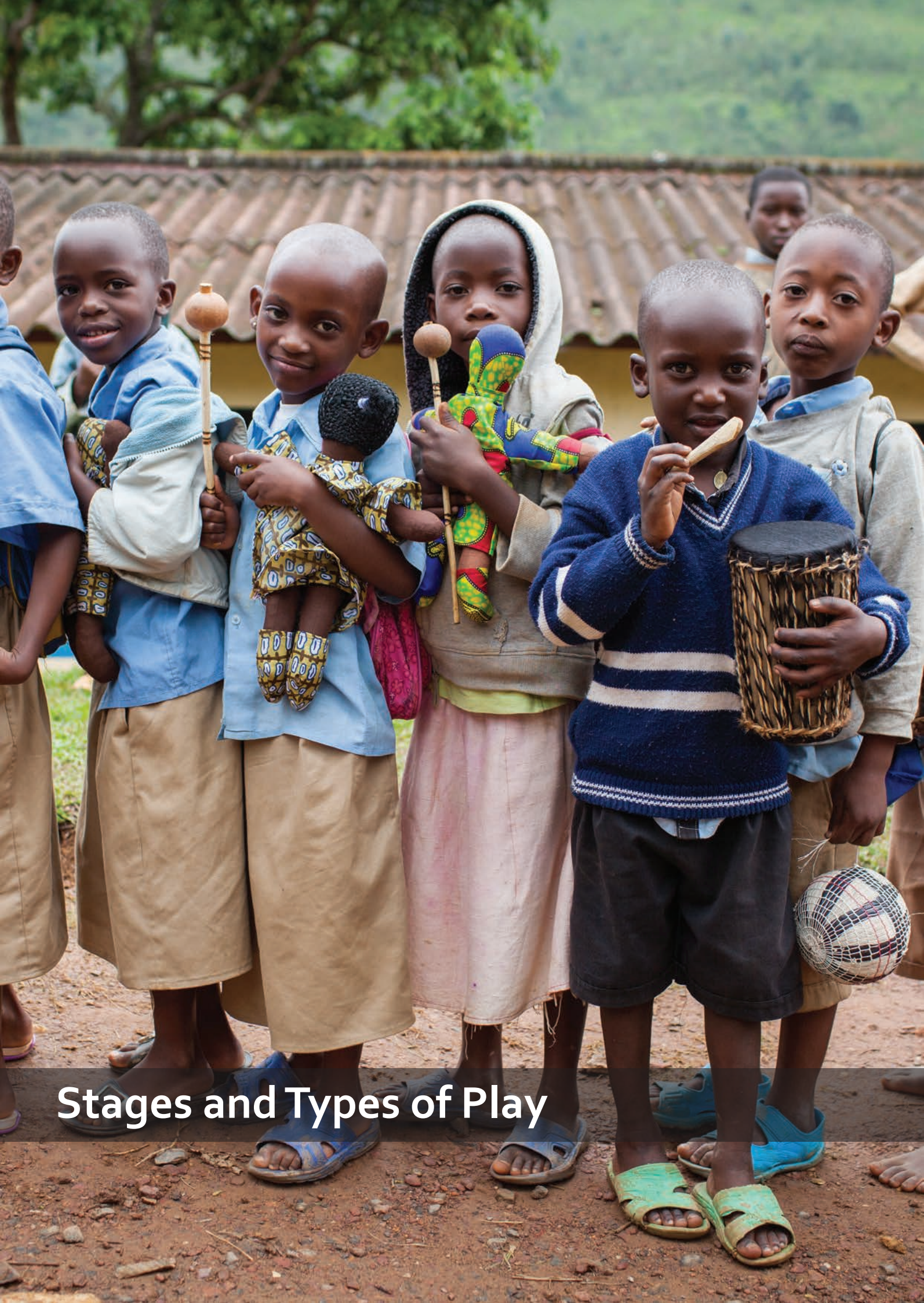
A wide range of structured and unstructured activities are needed to support ECD. With this in mind, you will want to work with the parents to offer activities that promote holistic development in seven areas:

- *Arts and Language Development*: activities that encourage singing, talking, listening, reading, drawing, and writing help children to develop their imagination and communication skills.
- *Emotional and Social Skills*: activities that encourage children to interact with others and become aware of emotions, respond appropriately and build important skills to help them to form relationships with others.
- *Intellectual Development*: activities that encourage collecting, comparing, remembering and organizing things help children to develop analytical and problem solving skills.
- *Life Skills*: activities that focus on keeping a healthy and clean body and a clean and organized environment help children to learn important skills.
- *Mathematics*: activities that include number, shape, size, weight and color help children develop analytical and numeracy skills.
- *Motor skills*: activities involving movement help them improve their coordination, strength and speed.
- *Sciences*: activities that encourage awareness and respect for the natural environment encourage children to form a connection to their environment

All of these development activities can and should be fun for children! This is what we mean by ‘Play with Purpose.’”

How will I know that my playgroup is successful?

- Have a bigger turn up of children every week and who are active and participating actively.
- Parents attending in big numbers, confidently supporting teachers in organizing and managing playgroups and are sharing success with others.



Stages and Types of Play

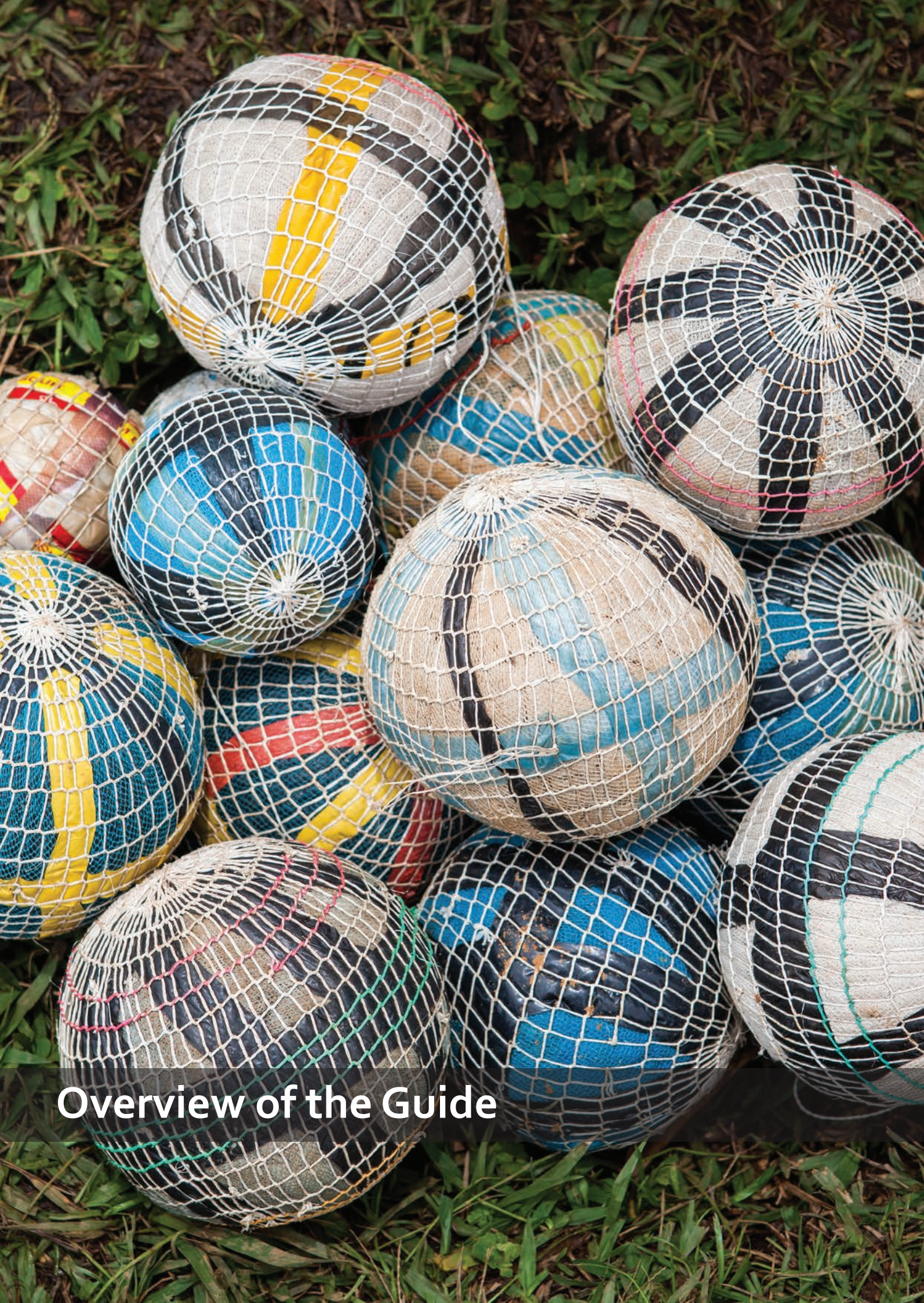
Stages and Types of Play

Expert from the National Curriculum Development Centers' Guide for Family and Neighborhood Collection of Educational Materials, Equipment and Toys (Book 7):

Children learn by playing. By playing, children are mastering skills and mastering their environment. They are gaining knowledge that they need by experimenting, actively engaging and solving problems they meet.

There are different stages and types of play:

- **Non-participatory play:** Children tend when they are very young or in a strange or different environment, to watch other children playing. By doing this they learn the patterns of interactions, the possible use of materials and the themes of the play. They see where they may be able to join in. This is an important stage in play.
- **Solitary play:** Very young children and those who are in a new environment, as well as all children at one time or another, play alone. This is an important step to take in the stages of development. When children play alone, they concentrate on their own relationship with the materials they are manipulating and using. They may not mind when others come to join them. They may on the other hand, resent social play if they are focusing entirely upon the material at hand.
- **Parallel play:** Children when they are very young, tend to play next to each other but without socializing or cooperating. This is similar to solitary play, except that the children involved enjoy playing next to another child.
- **Cooperative play:** When children are slightly older (perhaps at the age of three and older, though this depends entirely upon the children themselves) they tend to play cooperatively, sharing the game or the materials and working together to add value to the play. This happens particularly with constructive play and with fantasy play.
- **Structured play:** Structured play is structured by the adult. The materials are prearranged, often with a specific theme (i.e., hospital or post office).
- **Unstructured play:** Unstructured play is that which the children devise for themselves without adult intervention.



Overview of the Guide



Overview of the Guide

This guide will help you to establish or support a playgroup for orphans and other vulnerable children in your village. It includes background information to help you understand how playgroups fit into the wider Government of Rwanda Early Childhood Development (ECD) priorities, offers an overview of the playgroup approach, together with activities that you can organize during your playgroup and helpful suggestions to help you get started.

Rationale for playgroups

Early Childhood Development (ECD) is defined as a comprehensive approach to policies and programmes for children from birth to eight years of age, their parents and caregivers, aimed at protecting the child's rights to develop his or her full cognitive, emotional, social and physical potential" (UNESCO 2001).

In Rwanda children from zero to six years of age are facing serious problems – problems related to poverty, orphanage, disabilities, HIV/AIDS and other diseases, as well as problems due to lack of adequate family planning and to child abuse. Thus, Rwanda needs to find a response to this threat that is undermining our country development.

The Early Childhood Development (ECD) Policy of Rwanda seeks to ensure all Rwandan children will achieve their full potential (physical, intellectual, spiritual, social, emotional development) and mothers and fathers will become nurturing caregivers of the next generation. This will be achieved through developing community-led, integrated ECD programmes, and through strengthening and coordinating essential inter-sectoral and sectoral services for children and parents.

A playgroup for children under 5 is one of the approaches USAID/Higa Ubeho is using in supporting the Government of Rwanda ECD policy. USAID/Higa Ubeho program has been providing support 17 ECE centers in 6 districts of Ruhango, Muhanga, Rulindo, Gakenke, Gasabo and Kicukiro and building on the success from this pilot phase, the playgroup is scaled up in all the 20 districts of USAID/Higa Ubeho. We hope that each playgroup will contribute to the establishment/success of ECE centers throughout Rwanda

Why was this guide developed?

This guide was developed to guide the volunteers in leading and managing their playgroup sessions. It provides simple, user-friendly information that playgroup organizers can use to plan and deliver programming for vulnerable children.

In developing this guide, we have tried to bring together only the most relevant and practical information from resources developed within Rwanda and internationally. For this revised version, the activities and games were developed in consultation with teachers/volunteers who have been leading and managing playgroups in the 2010-2011 pilot phase of the program. Our hope is that local organizations and community-based volunteers will use this guide to support the emotional and physical development of young orphans and other vulnerable children, especially those between the ages of 2 to 5.

How should you use this guide?

Although you can read the whole guide, following each page in the proper sequence, you can also skip directly to the relevant sections to find the information that you need. Since this guide provides only basic information, we encourage you to also consult other available resources to expand your knowledge.

The guide gives you the flexibility to pick and choose activities, games, songs and group lessons that are suited to the age of the children you are working with, the time and materials available and your geographical location and setting.



Managing a Playgroup



Managing a Playgroup

Sample agenda

Below is a sample program for a playgroup with notes to guide the Playgroup Volunteers:

Activity	Suggested Duration
Welcome & introductions	20 minutes
Warm up	30 minutes
Small group activities – structured play	30 minutes
Free time – unstructured play	20 minutes
Closing words & good-byes	10 minutes
Clean up	10 minutes

Mobilizing parents and local authorities

Before the playgroup sessions start:

- Make sure that the local authorities and nursery schools directors understand well the activities and provide their support in mobilizing community volunteers that will facilitate the playgroup sessions.
- Ask that the playgroup activities to be communicated during community gathering like “Umuganda” and parent meeting at school level by the directors encouraging parents to volunteer and get involved.
- Encourage children to tell their parents what they do at the playgroup.
- Preparing the venue and setting up playgroup area.
- Try to set-up the area prior to the arrival of the parents. This will enable the children to begin playing as soon as they arrive. You will want to have mats stretched out on the floor/ground for parents with young children and specific areas set up for different games/activities.

Preparing the venue and setting up the playgroup area

Try to set-up the area prior to the arrival of the parents. This will enable the children to begin playing as soon as they arrive. You will want to have mats stretched out on the floor/ground for parents with young children, and specific areas set up for different games/activities.

Running a playgroup session

Note: these instructions are designed to help you to follow the agenda provided on the previous page.

Welcome & introductions

Greet the parents/guardians as they arrive with their children, and invite the children to play with the other children and the available toys. As the children play, invite all of the parents to introduce themselves and to point out their child to the group.

Warm up

During the warm up exercise, invite the parents and children to sing and dance to a familiar song.(Refer to following activities for some common songs.) As much as possible, encourage the adults to engage their child (i.e., make eye contact, give encouraging smiles and helping them to sing and dance along with the group). Note: there is no right or wrong movements, all children are at different levels and the goal is simply participation. Encourage the parents to teach new song, games and activities that they might know and think that could be fun and educative for the children.

Structured play

The types of activities will depend on the ages and needs of the children and the level of confidence and creativity of the playgroup volunteers. Also depending on the number of children that turned up, this session can be organized in small groups.

Review the different types of play highlighted in this guide, to select one activity that the children can play for 20 to 30 minutes. Encourage the adults to watch and congratulate the children as they participate in the activity.

Free time – unstructured play

Invite the children to play freely, choosing whatever toys or activities that meet their interests. Again, encourage the adults to observe their children – are the children happy? What kind of assurance and support can they provide to help the children play/learn? How do they feel as they watch their children? (You may need to move around the area and speak one-on-one with some parents during this time.)

Closing words & good-byes

At the end of each session, invite the parents to talk about what they liked about the session, and what could be improved next time. Close the session by inviting children to lead common songs and thank all of them for their participations.

Clean up

Seek help from 1-2 parents to put away the toys and clean up the area at the end of the session.

Tips for managing larger groups

From the pilot phase in Rwanda, some playgroups had a very large turnout, with more than 100 children. Organizing and managing such a large group of children throughout the playgroup session will require working with them in smaller groups. We suggest that you group children into a manageable group of between 20 -30 children and involve parents to help you manage the groups.

Below are two options for grouping the children and parents. However, you can choose other methods for grouping the children depending upon the goal of your playgroup.

Option 1: Organize the children by village. The advantage of this grouping is that children and their parents can develop supportive relationships with others from their village. This will enable them to continue sharing ideas and encourage one another even after the playgroups

Option 2: Organize the children by age, such that 2-4 year olds are in one group, and 5+ year olds are in another group. The advantage of this grouping is that the facilitators can more adapt to and meet the needs of these different groups, because older children have a different level of understanding and different interests than younger children.

IDEAS FOR WARM UP ACTIVITIES: Ages 2-5 years





Ideas for Warm Up Activities

Ages 2-5 years

These activities are intended for children aged 2-5 years and will mainly help you during the warm up sessions. They are composed of songs, poems, short stories etc. Feel free to modify the activities according to what makes sense in your community.

The activities in this section include;

- **Activity 1: Singing in Numbers – Number 1, Number 1 where are you?** This activity will help children to develop language and numerical skills.
- **Activity 2: Dance and Stop** The activity will help children to develop listening, concentration and coordination skills.
- **Activity 3: Clapping Hands** This activity helps children to develop an awareness of numbers.
- **Activity 4: Story Telling Time** Story telling helps children to develop listening and to learn culture and discipline.
- **Activity 5: Waramutse Kazuba – Good Morning Mr. Sun** This activity will help children to develop listening, concentration and coordination skills.
- **Activity 6: Poem – Jyewe Nkunda Igikoma** This activity will help children to develop creative skills.
- **Activity 7: Our Five Senses** This activity helps children to learn about the five senses.

ACTIVITY 1: SINGING IN NUMBERS

“NUMBER 1, NUMBER 1 WHERE ARE YOU?”

Goal: To develop language and counting skills

Materials: None

Directions:

1. Ask the children to stand in the circle.
2. Explain: we are going to sing a song in numbers, if I call a number you should come in the centre of the circle and dance.
3. Tell the children to count 1-10 then the children next to number 10 starts on 1 and repeat until each kid gets a number (Buri mwana akabara kuva kuri 1 kugeza ku 10). Tell the children to remember their number (Gusaba buri mwana gufata numero ye mu mutwe).
4. Tangira indirimbo uvuga ati “number one (x2), where are you? Noneho ba number one bese bagasubiza bati “here I am, here I am. Ukongera ukavuga uti “How do you do?” bagakomeza gutyo kugeza igihe numbers zose zirangiriye.
5. Rangiza ubashimira bese ko bazi kuririmba nokubara.

ACTIVITY 2: DANCE AND STOP*

Goal: To develop listening, concentration and coordination skills.

Materials: Small drum(s)

Directions:

1. Ask the children and parents to stand facing you.
2. Explain
 - When I beat the drum we will all dance.
 - But when I stop beating the drum, you must also stop dancing and stand completely still without moving.
 - Anyone who continues to dance when the drumming has stopped must sit down and encourage the rest of the group dance.
 - The last person dancing wins.
3. Begin the game with a practice turn. Play the drums and encourage the children to dance. Then suddenly stop beating the drums and see who continues to dance.
4. Congratulate all of the children/parents and explain that now that we all understand the rules, we can begin the game.

Note: you can also do this activity with children alone while the parents watch and encourage them to dance.

*Adopted from Family Health International: Playgroup Activities.

ACTIVITY 3: CLAPPING HANDS*

Goal: To develop an awareness of numbers.

Materials: None

Directions:

1. Ask the children and parents to sit in a circle together
2. Explain
 - I am going to say a number.
 - After we hear the number, we are going to clap our hands that many times.
 - For example: if I say the number two, we are going to clap our hands two times. (Demonstrate by clapping your hands two times.)
3. Begin the game.
 - Number 1, then clap your hands together with the children once.
 - Number 4, then clap your hands together with the children four times.
4. Repeat the game until you have done several numbers

Note: you can also do this activity with children alone while the parents watch and encourage them to dance.

*Adopted from Family Health International: Playgroup Activities.

ACTIVITY 4: STORY TELLING TIME

Goal: To develop listening and to learn culture and discipline.

Materials: None

Directions:

Ask all the children and their parents to sit in a circle while facing you. And tell to listen the story and then you will ask them some questions at the end of each story.

Story 1: Inkuru y'abana batatu

Intego: Kwigisha abana imico myiza(kutiba)

1. Habayeho abana batatu, umwe yitwa Rutwe, undi Buguru buzonzwe, undi yitwa Ruda. Umunsi umwe bajya kwiba amacunga. Bageze munsi y'igiti, Rutwe ararama areba amacunga mu giti, urutwe ruragwa ruratakara. Ruda abibonye araseka cyaneeee!!!!,uruda ruraturika. Buguru nawe ariruka agiye gutabariza bagenzi be, ubuguru buravunika!
 - a. Mbese abana bitwa bande?
 - b. Mbese bari bagiye he?
 - c. Nonese byagenze gute?
2. Gusozwa ubwira abana ngo: Ni uko rero bana mujye mwirinda kwiba mutazamera nkaba bana.

Story 2. Sehene n'ihene ye!

Intego: Kwereka abana ububi bwo kuzerera no gusuzugura

1. Sehene yari afite ihene ayishyira mu kiraro, akayahirira ubwatsi bwiza akayihira. Arayibwira ati ugomba kujya uguma hano mu kiraro kuko umunsi wasohotse uzahura n'ikirura kikakurya. Umunsi umwe Sehene yagiye kwahira, ihene ibona adahari, yigira inama yo gusohoka ikajya kurisha ku gasozi. Igezeyo ihura n'ikirura gihita kiyirya! Ihene igenda ityo.
 - a. Mbese ihene ya sehene yayishyizehe?
 - b. Sehene yabwiye gute ihene ye?
 - c. Nonese byagenze gute?
2. Gusozwa ubwira abana ngo: Si byiza rero kuzerera no gusuzugura ababyeyi, mutazamera nk'ihene ya Sehene.

ACTIVITY 5: WARAMUTSE KAZUBA – GOOD MORNING MR.SUN

Goal: To develop listening, concentration and coordination skills.

Materials: None

Directions:

1. Invite all the children and parents to stand in the circle facing you
2. Explain: we are all going to sing a song in both in English and Kinyarwanda. The teacher/volunteer will start and all others will repeat after the teacher.

*Waramutse kazuba! (Good morning Mr.Sun!)
Amakuru yawe uyumunsi? (How are you today?)
Ngwino uduhe urumuri (Come and give us light)
Rwaka rwaka cyane! (Shine shine and shine!!!)*

*Imvura imvura wowe genda (Rain rain goes away)
Uzagaruke undi munsi (Come back another day)
Abana bato bashaka gukina. (Little children want to play)*

Talalala talalala! ×2 (Cheers!!!!)

ACTIVITY 6: POEM – I LIKE PORRIDGE

Goal: To develop creative skills.

Materials: None

Directions:

1. Ask the children to sit in a circle.
2. Explain that all of you are going to repeat after me and then after 3 times you are going to say the poem on your own.

*Gutangira umuvugo:
"jye nkunda igikoma".
"Jye nkunda igikoma;
"Gitera imbaraga;
"Iyo ngiye kwiga;
"Ngenda nyoye igikoma
"Amasomo yose;
"Mwalimu aduhaye;
"Nkayatikura "Uwo muni kandi
"Imbeho ngo meee!!!!!!*

3. Ask if there is anyone who can stand up and recite the poem once the child finishes reciting ask others to give a big clap. Keep asking different children to recite while others clap for him/her.
4. Congratulate the children on having mastered the poem.

ACTIVITY 7: OUR FIVE SENSES

Goal: To learn about the five senses.

Materials: None

Directions:

1. Ask the children to sit in a circle.
2. Lead a discussion using the following questions and answers. Below are ideas that you can use. (Note: use only one option if you are working with younger children in order to give them enough time for each response and to avoid boredom.)

OPTION A

- "Where are your eyes?"
(Children point to their eyes)
- "Where are your ears?"
(Children point to their ears)
- "Where is your mouth?"
(Children point to their mouth)
- "Where is your nose?"
(Children point to their nose)
- "Where are your hands?"
(Children show their hands)

OPTION B

- "How many eyes do you have?"
(Two)
- "How many ears do you have?"
(Two)
- "How many mouths do you have?"
(One)
- "How many noses do you have?"
(One)
- "How many hands do you have?"
(Two)

OPTION C

- "What can we do with our eyes?"
(We see with our eyes)
- "What can we do with our ears?"
(We hear with our ears)
- "What can we do with our mouth?"
(We taste with our mouth)
- "What can we do with our nose?"
(We smell with our nose)
- "What can we do with our hands?"
(We touch with our hands)
- "What can I see with my two eyes?"
(My family, my friends, animals, my house, the sky, etc.)
- "What can I taste with my mouth?"
(Rice, chicken, mango, coconut milk, medicine, rain water, etc.)
- "What can I hear with my two ears?"
(Talking, laughter, music, animals, thunder, cars, motos etc)
- "What can I smell with my nose?"
(Good smells – cooking, flowers, etc.) (Bad smells – dust, rubbish, etc.)
- "What can I touch with my two hands?"
(My family, my friends, my clothes, trees, plants, animals, etc.)

3. End the activity by summarizing what the children have learned.

IDEAS FOR STRUCTURED PLAY: Ages 2-4 years





Ideas for Structured Play

Ages 2-4 years

These activities will mainly help you organize the structured play session very well. They are intended for children aged 2-4 years; however, some of the activities can also be adopted for children who are above 4 years. Feel free to adopt these games for older children in the playgroups.

These activities include:

- **Activity 1: Simoni Aravuze Ngo** This activity helps develop listening, concentration and coordination skills.
- **Activity 2: The Crow Catches the Chickens** This activity develops quick thinking and moving skills.
- **Activity 3: Mbe Murobyi Amazi Ageheze?** This activity aims at encouraging creativity and imagination while learning body parts.
- **Activity 4: Agatambara K' Umwana W' Imana** This activity aims at encouraging creativity in children.
- **Activity 5: Body Parts** This activity helps children to learn about the human body.
- **Activity 6: Clean Hands** This activity helps children to learn basic hygiene skills.
- **Activity 7: Tall and Small** This activity helps children develop listening and concentration skills.

ACTIVITY 1: SIMON SAYS*

Goal: To develop listening, concentration and coordination skills.

Materials: None

Directions:

1. Ask the children to stand facing you
2. Explain
 - When I give the command "Simon says..." you must do what I say. For example, if I say "Simon says touch your nose!" you should touch your nose.
 - You should continue touching your nose until you hear another command from "Simon says..."
 - But, if you say "Touch your nose!" you should not touch your nose, because I didn't say the words "Simon says..."
3. Begin the game.
 - Say: "Simon says touch your head."
 - Congratulate the children for touching their head for listening carefully.
 - Say "Simon says put your hands on your hips." Congratulate the children for listening very carefully.
 - Say: "Wave your arms in the air." Congratulate the children who didn't do the new action because you didn't say "Simon says wave your arms in the air".
 - In a playful and fun way, ask the children who 'waved their arms' to sit and watch the group continue the game.
4. Repeat a few more times until you have one child remaining – he/she is the winner.

Note: the parents can also participate in this activity or simply watch and encourage the children throughout the game.

*Adopted from Family Health International: Playgroup Activities.

ACTIVITY 2: THE CROW CATCHES THE CHICKENS*

Goal: To develop quick thinking and moving skills.

Materials: None

Directions:

1. Choose one child to pretend to be a crow.
2. Choose another child to pretend to be a hen.
3. Tell the rest of the children that they are the hen's chicks.
4. Invite the hen's chicks to stand in a line behind the hen holding on to each other's waists.
5. Explain:
 - The crow is going to try to catch the chicks that are behind the hen.
 - The hen must run to try to keep his/her chicks away from the crow.
 - The chicks must move with the hen and never let go of the waist of the chick or hen in front of them.
 - If the crow catches you, you become a baby crow, and you will need to stand behind and hold onto the waist of the crow or the baby crow. The game ends when all the chicks have been caught by the crow.
6. Begin the game by asking the hen and the chicks to start moving away from the crow.
7. If there is time to play again, try to give different children the opportunity to be the crow and the hen.

Note: if you have a large group, choose several children to be 'hens.'

*Adopted from Family Health International: Playgroup Activities.

ACTIVITY 3: THE FISHERMAN – HOW HIGH WILL THE WATER GET?

Goal: To encourage creativity and imagination while learning body parts.

Materials: None

Directions:

1. Ask the children and parents to stand on one line facing you. Stand at a distance between you and the children. Tell the children that you are going to act as fisherman.
2. Explain:
 - We are going to imagine that in front of us there a big water/lake and the fisherman who is across is the only one to tell how we shall cross the water.
 - Children: "mbe Murobyi amazi ageze he?"
 - The fisherman responds: amazi ageze ku kubirenge.
 - Children: Turayambuka gute?
 - The fisherman responds: Murayambuka musimbuka mufashe kumutwe.
3. Abana barambuka uko murobyi yababwiye.
4. Bamaze kuyambuka, ni ukuvuga ko baba bageze kuri murobyi bagasubira aho bari bahagaze biruka bakongera bakabaza Murobyi.
5. Bigakomeza bityo murobyi agenda ahindura bitewe ni icyo ashaka kwigisha abana.

ACTIVITY 4: CLOTH OF GOD'S CHILD

Goal: To encourage creativity.

Materials: A piece of cloth or a small stick.

Directions:

1. Ask the children to sit in a circle.
2. Explain:
 - One of you will receive a piece of cloth or a small stick will walk around the circle singing: "Agatambara k'umwana w'Imana karihe" and the rest of us will answer: "Ngaho karahise".
 - When the person holding the piece of cloth or stick drops the stick in your lap, you need to get up and run around the circle trying to get back to your spot before he/she does.
 - Whoever reaches first, can sit with the group in the circle and the other person will now sing "Agatambara k'umwana w'imana karihe" and repeat the same thing until they can rejoin the circle.
3. Demonstrate how to play the game once and then start the game.
4. Repeat several times.

Note: it is best to perform this activity outside. Also, encourage the parents to cheer for the children as they run around the circle.

ACTIVITY 5: BODY PARTS*

Goal: To learn about the human body.

Materials: None

Directions:

Option 1

1. Ask the children to sit in a circle.
2. Explain:
 - When I say the name of a body part, you will point to the part on yourself. For example, if I say “head,” we should all point to our heads.
3. Begin the game.
 - Say “eye” and wait for the children/parents to point to their eyes.
 - Congratulate all of the children.
 - Encourage them to say the word ‘eye’ together with you
4. Repeat the activity until you have named several different parts of the body.

Option 2

1. Ask the children to sit in a circle.
2. Explain:
 - When I say the name of a body part, you will point to the part on someone else. For example, if I say “head,” you should point to someone else’s head.
3. Begin the game.
 - Say “head” and wait for the children to point to the head of someone else. (Encourage the parents to help their children to point their fingers to the appropriate body part.)
 - Congratulate all of the children.
 - Encourage them to say the word ‘head’ together with you.
4. Repeat the activity until you have named several different parts of the body.

Note: In case some of the children/parents have missing limbs or specific disabilities, try not to bring attention to those differences. The person might feel awkward or embarrassed.

*Adopted from Family Health International: Playgroup Activities.

ACTIVITY 6: CLEAN HANDS*

Goal: To learn basic hygiene skills.

Materials: Basins, water, soap (and towel if available).

Directions:

1. Ask the children to sit in a circle.
2. Ask the children: What are clean hands?
3. Explain: Clean hands are hands without dirt or germs on them. We can eat food when we have clean hands.
4. Ask the children: How can we get our hands clean?
5. Explain: We get our hands clean by washing with soap with water.
6. Ask the children: What are dirty hands?
7. Explain: Hands that have touched many things such as the ground, animals, and play things and have dirt and germs on them.
8. Ask the children: "Why is it bad to have dirty hands?"
9. Explain: When our hands are dirty and have germs on them, the germs can make us sick.
10. Ask the children: "What is one way of knowing if our hands are clean or dirty?"
11. Explain: Sometimes we can know if our hands are clean or dirty by looking at them, but sometimes, the dirt is so small that we cannot see it, so our hands may look clean, but actually they have dirt and germs on them. Our hands touch many things that are not clean, so we need to wash our hands often to stop ourselves from getting sick.
12. Ask the children: When should we wash our hands?
13. Explain: we should wash our hands every time before we eat food, after going to the toilet, and after playing outside or touching animals.
14. Use the buckets of water, soap, and clean tissue or towel to show the children how to wash their hands correctly by following the five simple steps (explain what you are doing at each step):
 - Wet your hands, lather them with soap and rub your hands together for 15 seconds (sing a song; sing the alphabet to demonstrate that you need to take time rubbing the soap all over your hands).
 - Rinse your hands with water, and dry them on a clean cloth or towel.
15. Invite the children to practice washing their hands in the same way.
16. Ask the parents to help each child as praise them for doing it well.

*Adopted from Family Health International: Playgroup Activities.

ACTIVITY 7: TALL AND SMALL*

Goal: To develop listening and concentration skills.

Materials: None

Directions:

1. Ask the children to stand facing you.
2. Explain:
 - When I say “Tall” everyone should stretch their arms up to and make themselves as tall as possible.
 - When I say the word “Small” everyone should squat down on the ground and make themselves as small as possible.
3. Begin the game:
 - Say “Tall” and wait for everyone to stretch their arms up high in the air.
 - Congratulate everyone for listening so carefully and making themselves tall.
 - Say “Small” and wait for everyone to do the appropriate action.
 - Congratulate everyone.
4. Repeat the activity, a few times – encouraging the children and parents to make themselves even taller or smaller each time.

*Adopted from Family Health International: Playgroup Activities.

IDEAS FOR STRUCTURED PLAY: Ages 5 and above





Ideas for Structured Play

Ages 5 and above

The activities in this section are intended for children aged 5 and above years during the structured play session. Feel free to modify the activities according to what makes sense in your community.

The activities in this section include.

- **Activity 1: Agati** The activity encourages sports and competition among children.
- **Activity 2: Follow the Shape** The activity helps children to learn about different shapes.
- **Activity 3: Chase the Horse's Tail** The activity aims at helping children to develop quick thinking, moving and teamwork skills.
- **Activity 4: Birds Fly** This activity helps children to develop listening, concentration and coordination skills.
- **Activity 5: Over and Under Game** This activity aims at helping children to develop concentration, coordination and teamwork skills.
- **Activity 6: Grouping by Numbers** This activity helps children to develop counting and teamwork skills.
- **Activity 7: Sakwe Sakwe** This activity will encourage language development.

ACTIVITY 1: THE STICK GAME*

Goal: To teach children about sports and competition.

Materials: A stick or along folded paper or a marker.

Directions:

1. Ask the children to form two parallel lines with each line having the same number of children and the same ages.
2. One child will stand at the right end of the first line with a stick.
3. Another child will stand at the left end of the second line with a stick too.
4. Explain to the first child in each line holding the stick that they are going to run in a circle around both lines in order to hand the stick to the next child waiting in line.
5. Explain that if one child running with the stick passes or touches the other child running with the stick, he/she scores a point for their team.
6. Ask children to be ready to start the game by telling them that you will count up to three (1, 2, 3) and that children with sticks will start the game.
7. The two children with the sticks on the opposite lines will begin running with the objective of touching the other runner with their stick. If he or she arrives at the starting point without touching the other player, he/she will hand the stick to the following child on the line and the game continues until they get a score.
8. Note: The score is obtained when one of the players manages to run and touches the other runner with the stick or if the runner runs the wrong way and cuts in front of the line rather than running the full circle.
9. When a score is obtained, the teams exchanges places.

*Adopted from Family Health International: Playgroup Activities.

ACTIVITY 2: FOLLOW THE SHAPE*

Goal: To learn shapes.

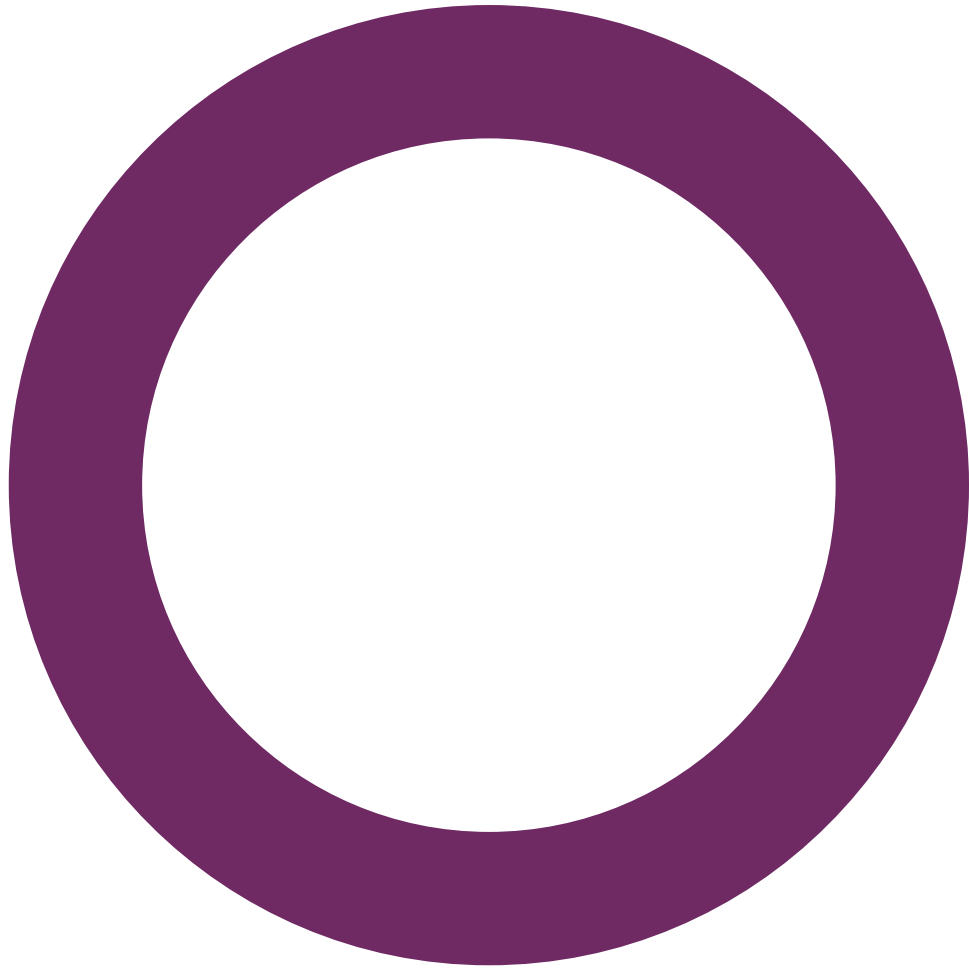
Materials: A4 paper with drawings of shapes.

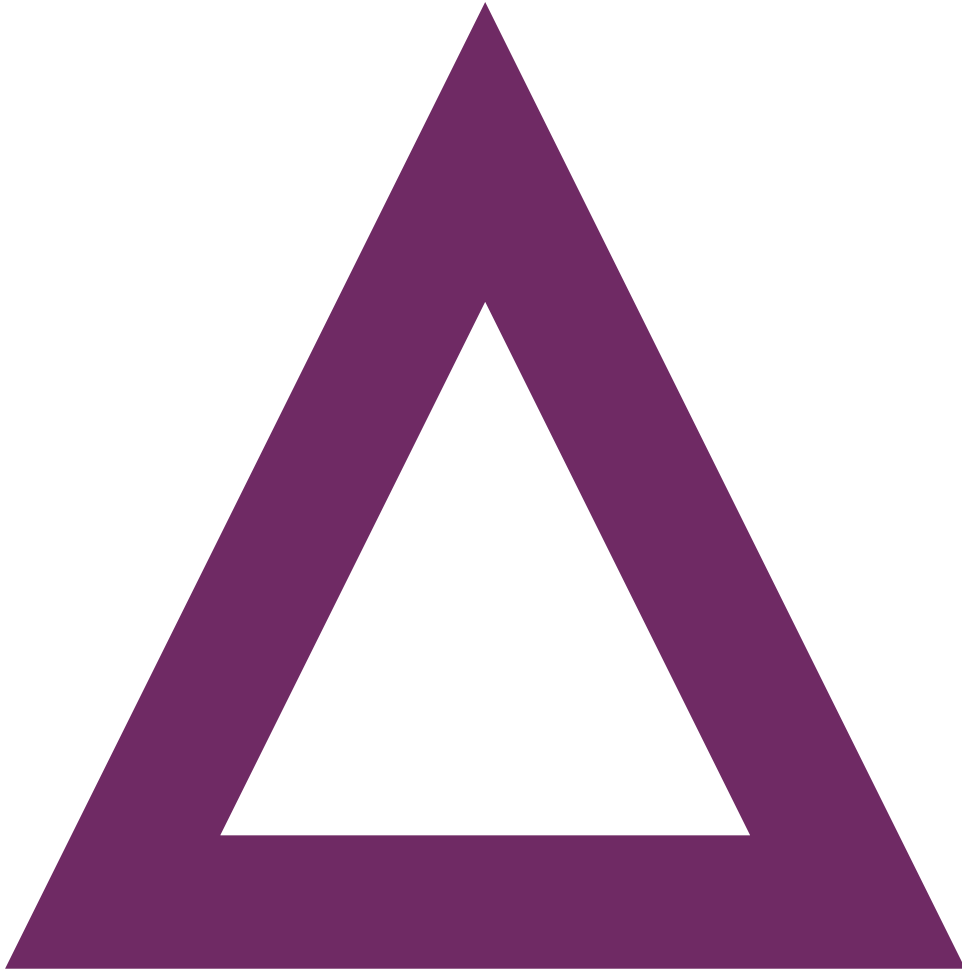
Directions:

1. Hold up a paper with a drawing of one of the following shapes. (Circle, square, triangle, rectangle, diamond, oval, star, etc.) for everyone to see.
2. Ask the children to name the shape.
3. Now ask the children to hold up their arm in the air and to draw the shape in the air together with you.
4. Congratulate everyone.
5. Ask them to stand in the shape of the named drawing (i.e. a circle, square, etc. and hold hands to form a shape of that mentioned shape).
6. Ask them to name the shape again.
7. If the children are able, encourage them to keep trying the shape as a group (it must stay a perfect circle, square, triangle, etc.)
8. Repeat this activity with different shapes.

Note: the parents can help their children to draw the shape in the air by guiding the child's hand. In addition, the parents can guide the children to stand in the named shape.

*Adopted from Family Health International: Playgroup Activities.





ACTIVITY 3: CHASE THE HORSE'S TAIL*

Goal: To develop quick thinking, moving and teamwork skills.

Materials: None.

Directions:

1. Choose one child to be the horse's head and tell the rest of the children that they are the horse's tail.
2. Tell all the children to line up behind the child who is the horse's head and put their hands on the shoulders of the child in front.
3. Explain that the horse's head must try to catch the end of the horse's tail (the last child in the line). The children must move together and shouldn't let go of the shoulders of the child in front of them. The horse's tail must try to get away from the horse's head.
4. When the end of the horse's tail has been caught, the last child in the line is out of the game and the child who was the horse's head takes his/her place and becomes the new end of the horse's tail.
5. The game ends when all the children have been caught and there are only two children remaining (the horse's head and tail).

*Adopted from Family Health International: Playgroup Activities.

ACTIVITY 4: BIRDS FLY*

Goal: To develop listening and creative skills.

Materials: None

Directions:

1. Ask the children to stand facing you.
2. Explain that you will call out the names of animals. Some of these animals can fly. Some cannot. When you hear the name of an animal that can fly, you run and flap your arms like they were wings. For example:
 - “Robins fly!” Everyone flap your arms.
 - “Ducks fly!” Everyone flap your arms.
 - “Sparrows fly!” Everyone flap your arms.
 - “Cows fly!” Everyone stand still. Cows cannot fly.
3. End the game by congratulating everyone on knowing which animals have wings and can fly.

*Adopted from Family Health International: Playgroup Activities.

ACTIVITY 5: OVER UNDER GAME*

Goal: To develop concentration, coordination and teamwork skills.

Materials: Balls

Directions:

1. Divide the children into teams of five or six and give each team a ball.
2. Mark out a starting and finishing line and ask the teams to line up behind the starting line.
3. Explain that when you say, "Go!" the child at the front of the team must pass the ball over his/ her head to the child behind (without turning around). The next child takes the ball and passes it under his/her legs (without turning around).
4. The next child takes the ball and passes it over his/her head and so on. This 'over-under' pattern continues all the way down the line until the ball reaches the child at the end of the line.
5. This child must run from the back of the line to the front and start the 'over-under' process again.
6. The game continues until every child has had a turn at the front of the line. When the child who was at the front of the line at the start of the game is back at the front again, the whole team must sit down.
7. The first team to sit down is the winner.

*Adopted from Family Health International: Playgroup Activities.

ACTIVITY 6: GROUPING BY NUMBERS*

Goal: To develop listening and creative skills.

Materials: None

Directions:

1. Ask the children to stand facing you.
2. Explain that you are going to call out different numbers and when a number is called, the children have to quickly get into groups of that number. For example:
 - If number four is called out, the children have to get into groups of four.
 - If number two is called out, the children have to get into groups of two.
3. Play the game for as long as is appropriate.

*Adopted from Family Health International: Playgroup Activities.

ACTIVITY 7: SAKWE SAKWE

Goal: To encourage language development.

Materials: None

Directions:

1. Ask the children to sit in a circle.
2. Say "Sakwe, Sakwe" to catch their attention.
3. Ask the children to reply: "Soma, Soma".
4. Say one of the riddles:

Riddle 1:

- Sogokuru aryoha Aboze
- Umuneke

Riddle 2:

- Mfite abana 24, buri wese afite icyumba cye, iyo nya kubatuma mbanza kubaca umutwe
- Fanta

Riddle 3:

- Inka yanjye nyikama igaramye
- Umuvure

Riddle 4:

- Ngigye mu rutoki abasirikare baramfata
- Ibishokoro

Riddle 5:

- Kagaramiye inzira
- Agakongorerwa

Riddle 6:

- Mpagaze ku musozi nyarira abepfo
- Imvura

Riddle 7:

- Mpagaze mu Rwanda mburira kw'isi
- Radiyo

Riddle 8:

- Mfite abakobwa 10, upfuye ijisho muri bo yabatanze gusabwa
- Inopfu mu masaka

Riddle 9:

- Ko undeba ndaguha
- Inyenge y'inzu

Riddle 10:

- Abana ba mukeba bambaye imigoma bose
- Ibigori

Riddle 11:

- Agacwende kanjye kambaye kure mba ngukoreyemo
- Ukwezi

Riddle 12:

- Barugerageze imigozi barushyire hagati y'abagabo
- Umutsima

Riddle 13:

- Hepfo ngo pi, hirya ngo pi
- Imvura

Riddle 14:

- Hano ngo shi na hano ngo shi
- Igisheke

Riddle 15:

- Ngira umwana akarara agenda.
- Umugenzi

Annexes

Bibliography

Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Education, National Curriculum Development Center (2007)
Overview: Early Childhood Development (Book 1)

Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Education, National Curriculum Development Center (2007)
Becoming Parents: An Informal Guide. (Book 2)

Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Education, National Curriculum Development Center (2007)
Pre-Natal Development to Three Years (Home-Care Years) (Book 3)

Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Education, National Curriculum Development Center (2007)
Three to Five Years (Nursery years) and Five to Six Years (Reception Year) (Book 4)

Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Education, National Curriculum Development Center (2007)
A Guide for Family and Neighborhood Animators (Book Five)

Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Education, National Curriculum Development Center (2007)
A Guide for Guardians and Teachers Working in the ECD Sector – Ages 0-3, Ages 3-5, Ages 5-6 (Book 6)

Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Education, National Curriculum Development Center. (2007)
A Guide for Family and Neighborhood Collections of Educational Materials, Equipment and Toys (Book 7)

Family Health International (FHI). Playgroup Resource Book for Children Aged 3-5 Years and 6- 12
Years (2009)

Additional Resources

Right to Play, Early Child Play: Leader Manual Part 1 – Introduction (2007)

Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Education, Early Childhood Development Policy (2011)

Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Education, Integrated Early Childhood Development Strategic Plan
(2011/2012-2015/2016, 2011)

Republic of South Africa, Department of Education, Directorate of Early Childhood Development,
Early Learning and Development Ideas for Parents and Caregivers



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



**Global
Communities**
Partners for Good