

**UNICEF &
EDUCATION:
ECD KITS**

**ASPEN
DESIGN SUMMIT**

ASPEN MEADOWS, COLORADO | NOVEMBER 11 TO 14, 2009
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INITIATIVE

This initiative begins with a collaboration between AIGA, INDEX: and UNICEF to rethink approaches to two specific problems that must be overcome to provide effective support to education in developing countries. Faced with enormous challenges to advance education, UNICEF is striving to make schools safer, healthier and more conducive to learning, especially in the case of vulnerable and difficult-to-reach populations or children dislocated by disaster.

This initiative will focus on two well-defined projects, each of which can address an immediate need:

1. Design a low cost, durable Early Child Education kit that can be used in emergency situations
2. Design clean, dignified facilities and support services for menstruating girls, so they are more likely to continue to attend classes

Teams will develop thinking about how design interventions can capture both ideas for the projects and create a foundation for a global INDEX: | AIGA Aspen Design Challenge. This will be presented to design, engineering and business students at colleges around the world during 2010, resulting in the selection of several proposals to present to social venture entrepreneurs and UNICEF in spring 2011.

This excerpt from the briefing book only includes information around Early Child Development kits.

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT KITS

BACKGROUND

Children living through an emergency often do not receive the care and education they need because normal care giving networks and schooling systems are interrupted. This can take a heavy toll, especially on younger children, because the development process is interrupted, sometimes irreversibly. An emergency can therefore influence the development of an entire generation, undermining long-term goals for the development of human capital, civic participation and economic productivity – unless immediate action is taken to protect and support young children and their caregivers.

UNICEF has long used kits in emergency response to provide the supplies necessary to initiate immediate protective and supportive programming for children, families, caregivers and teachers. Most famous, perhaps, is what is commonly referred to as the School in a Box pioneered by UNICEF and UNESCO for use in Somalia and Rwanda in 2000. This kit includes blackboard paint, writing materials and other supplies necessary to re-establish educational processes when schools or school supplies are not available. The school-in-a-box kits costs \$206.

Most agree that local procurement of materials is preferable whenever possible, as local materials are more likely to be culturally-relevant, economical, appropriate to the specific needs of the current emergency, and supportive of the growth of the local economy and of the development of new skills, particularly among youth. However, in situations when immediate response is necessary and when local procurement is impossible, kits are promoted as a practical means of supplying the materials necessary for protecting and supporting children.

UNICEF launched a pilot study of an Early Childhood Development (ECD) kit in 2004. It was an attempt to address a wide range of concerns: child protection by supporting parents and care givers; early intervention to avoid the accumulation of trauma; healing through expression in play and art; consistency through the creation of routines; psychological support for parents, teachers and students; time and space for parents and caregivers; child development in language, social, cognitive, emotional and motor skills; community cohesion through involvement in a politically neutral activity; training and productive activity for adults working to staff and supply ECD programs.

The pilot ECD kit was designed to provide the materials necessary to facilitate play and learning activities for children from birth to age six; ensure safety and hygienic conditions; and support teachers and caregivers in facilitating programming under have situations of crisis. The kit was designed for use in “emergencies and beyond,” which also includes post-crisis transition, reconstruction, and any situation where materials for young children are simply not available.

The kit is packaged in an aluminium trunk, with a total weight of 33kg (73lb). Kits are designed to serve groups of 30 children at a time and cost 350 USD, to which an estimated minimum of 100 USD in freight is added.

They contain materials for caregivers and children ages 0-3 and 3-6. There were different reactions to many of the items, some of which are summarized here, which underscores the challenge of finding materials that are appropriate for different countries, cultures and situations.

Caregivers received adhesive tape, ball point pens, soap, a collapsible water bottle and ruled exercise books. The most popular

items were the collapsible water container, soap, ballpoint pens and the exercise book, included for record-keeping purposes. One concern that applies to the ballpoint pens and exercise book, as well as to the tape, markers and soap, is the need to replenish them once consumed.

For children 0-3, there was a ball, treasure basket of plastic shapes, and a plastic bucket, among other items. The plastic shape sorter kit was highly popular in Guyana, while caregivers in Jamaica found it inappropriate for both age groups of children. The plastic bucket was popular as a toy in Jamaica, yet participants expressed concern that it might compromise hygiene through use for repeated hand washing.

Children 3-6 were supplied with a plain paper pad, modelling clay, wooden beads, polyester skipping rope and hand puppets, among other items.

The glove and hand puppets, made of soft cloth and representing a variety of animals and insects, were highly popular in all pilot countries, as they could be used to explore and teach a variety of topics with children in both age groups. These were the most popular item in the Maldives, although caregivers worried about their lifespan in a hot, tropical climate. In Jamaica and Guyana, some concerns were expressed about unattractive colours and unfamiliar animals, which frightened some children.

Some materials, namely the crayons, blocks and beads, were simply considered too difficult to use. The most common complaint was that the thin crayons broke easily. The small size of the wooden blocks and beads for stringing made these activities difficult for children, as did the floppy string included with the beads. Participants in Jamaica also found the box holding the bead stringing set too difficult to open. The skipping

ropes, colourful lengths of plastic rope, were very popular yet also elicited a number of concerns. While skipping ropes were recommended by Jamaica for inclusion in the final kit, caregivers noted that the rope hurt some children's hands, and recommended the ropes be replaced by designated skipping ropes with plastic handles.

The aluminium box in which kit contents are stored and shipped was not popular among participants; however, there was no consensus on a workable alternative. The box (with contents packed inside) is too bulky and heavy for caregivers to carry, yet must be stackable and durable to endure shipping and storage under varied conditions.

In designing a new ECD kit, the following areas of concern need to be addressed:

- Appropriateness of materials for children of different ages
- Appropriateness of materials for children with special needs, including HIV/AIDS
- Appropriateness for children of diverse cultures and contexts
- Potential for sustainability with high quality and durable materials
- Global distribution v. local procurement
- Training materials and guidelines for caregivers
- Reducing the price to improve accessibility
- Developing a monitoring plan for use and implementation

CASE STUDY: SCHOOL-IN-A-BOX

Since the mid 1990s, UNICEF has delivered the School-in-a-Box to emergency situations all over the world, providing

the chance for children to continue their education during the most extreme crises.

It was developed by education experts from UNICEF and UNESCO to provide basic education to hundreds of thousands of children in refugee camps who had been displaced by the events in Rwanda in 1994. The purpose of the kit is to ensure the continuation of children's education by the first 72 hours of an emergency.

The concept is simple: school supplies and materials for up to 40 students, plus supplies for the teacher, are delivered in a locked box which can double as a blackboard when coated with the special paint included in the kit. In addition to the basic school supplies, such as exercise books, pencils, erasers and scissors, the kit also includes a wooden teaching clock, plastic cubes for counting and a set of three laminated posters (alphabet, multiplication and number tables). Using a locally developed teaching guide and curriculum, teachers can establish makeshift classrooms almost anywhere, thus ensuring the child's right to education.

The contents of the kit are culturally neutral, can be used anywhere in the world, and are often supplemented by locally purchased products, such as books in local languages, toys, games and musical instruments. Exercise books are printed without margins, so that children who write from left to right or from right to left can use them. Another version of the kit, without the lockable box, the School-in-a-Carton, is also available, as is a replenishment kit.

RESOURCES

www.unicef.org/supply/kits_flash/schoolinabox