

GIVE EVERY CHILD THE BEST START IN LIFE!

A Training Manual





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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	iii
Foreword	iv

THEME 1	INTRODUCTION TO THE MANUAL	1
TOPIC 1.1	How to use this manual	1
TOPIC 1.2	Many children die very young – we have to do something about it	2
TOPIC 1.3	About the best start in life for children	2

THEME 2	FOUNDATION FOR A HEALTHY START	4
TOPIC 2.1	Plan and time the birth of a child	4
TOPIC 2.2	Safe pregnancies and deliveries	5
TOPIC 2.3	Taking special care of newborns during their first month	8
TOPIC 2.4	Planning for the whole child	9

THEME 3	CHILDREN'S NUTRITION AND HEALTH	11
TOPIC 3.1	What a young child needs to grow up healthy	11
TOPIC 3.2	Why breastfeeding is best	12
TOPIC 3.3	Giving your child a variety of food – after breastfeeding	13
TOPIC 3.4	Taking your child for immunisation	14
TOPIC 3.5	Measuring the growth of your child	15

THEME 4	HYGIENE AND SANITATION	16
TOPIC 4.1	Drink only clean water	16
TOPIC 4.2	Sanitation and cleanliness promote good health	17

THEME 5	AVOIDING DANGEROUS ILLNESSES	20
TOPIC 5.1	Control malaria – get rid of mosquitoes	20
TOPIC 5.2	In case of diarrhoea	21
TOPIC 5.3	Treating worms is important	22
TOPIC 5.4	Preventing bilharzia	23
TOPIC 5.5	Coughs and colds can be serious	24

THEME 6	CHILDREN'S PLAY	25
TOPIC 6.1	Young children need to play	25
TOPIC 6.2	How to support children's play	26
TOPIC 6.3	Toys and materials for play	27

THEME 7	CHILDREN'S RIGHTS	29
TOPIC 7.1	The Convention on the Rights of the Child	29
THEME 8	CHILDREN DEVELOPING TO THEIR FULL POTENTIAL	31
TOPIC 8.1	The meaning of children developing "to their full potential"	31
THEME 9	DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF DEVELOPMENT	33
TOPIC 9.1	Supporting emotional development	33
TOPIC 9.2	Supporting intellectual development	34
TOPIC 9.3	Supporting language development	34
TOPIC 9.4	Supporting social development	35
TOPIC 9.5	Supporting creative development	36
THEME 10	GOOD BEHAVIOUR AND DISCIPLINE	37
TOPIC 10.1	Encouraging good behaviour	37
TOPIC 10.2	Building self-confidence	38
TOPIC 10.3	Good discipline	39
TOPIC 10.4	Dealing with problems	40
THEME 11	BOYS AND GIRLS IN A SAFE HOME ENVIRONMENT	41
TOPIC 11.1	Give the same attention to boys and girls	41
TOPIC 11.2	The role of fathers	42
TOPIC 11.3	Make a safe home environment	43
THEME 12	CHILDCARE AND HIV/AIDS	44
TOPIC 12.1	Protecting babies from HIV infection	44
TOPIC 12.2	Parents and caregivers taking control of HIV	45
TOPIC 12.3	Live positively with your children – in spite of HIV	46
TOPIC 12.4	Extended families facing new challenges	47
THEME 13	CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS	48
TOPIC 13.1	Focusing on children with disabilities and special needs	48
TOPIC 13.2	Attitudes towards children who are different	49
TOPIC 13.3	Child abuse and neglect	50
TOPIC 13.4	How to deal with abuse and neglect	51
THEME 14	COMMUNITY ACTION	53
TOPIC 14.1	What the community can do to create a supportive environment for young children	53

References	55
Notes page	56

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FOREWORD

UNICEF is pleased to share with people caring for young children, and their trainers, this publication entitled *Give Every Child the Best Start in Life! A training manual*. It is our sincere hope that the manual will be widely used by mothers, fathers and caregivers of children, and by their trainers, as a guide to and source of inspiration for giving every child the best start in life.

In Namibia we are challenged to improve conditions for young children. Too many do not make it to their first birthday, too many suffer from preventable diseases, too many do not have the care and support necessary for proper development. This manual focuses on what exactly parents and caregivers can do to help young children to survive, enjoy good health as they grow up and develop to their full potential.

Some of the topics in this manual relate especially to children in the first three years of life, a time when they are most vulnerable and in need of special care. The aim in selecting the topics was to address the whole child and all aspects of a healthy start in life. The manual does not provide every possible piece of information related to a topic, but only the most important, basic information. Users of the manual are encouraged to combine their own experiences with the information given here, so as to draw their own conclusions and take the right set of actions to make the most of the resources available for their children.

While we recognise that culture and religion are important aspects of childcare and children's development, this manual does not cover these personalised aspects which depend on the diverse backgrounds of children and their parents.

We thank all the people with different experiences who participated in creating, testing and revising this manual. May it serve its purpose well!

UNICEF Namibia



INTRODUCTION TO THE MANUAL

AIMS

- ➔ Understanding the contents of this manual, and how to use it
- ➔ Realising that we **CAN** reduce the number of deaths among young children
- ➔ Understanding an integrated approach to early childhood
- ➔ Taking all children seriously, and letting them master their world

TOPIC 1.1 How to use this manual

This manual gives information on what mothers, fathers and caregivers can do in the first three years of a child's life to give him or her the best possible start. It can also be used by family visitors or other caregivers who visit families or meet with groups of parents and caregivers. It can be useful for training sessions and workshops that deal with early childhood.



There are 13 themes, with information on relevant topics. There are also suggested activities and questions to think about and discuss. In some cases, the activities include suggestions about actions that you can take.

You can work through the themes in whatever order you want, depending on your needs and interests. For example, if you want focus on children's behaviour, you can go to Theme 9 (Good Behaviour and Discipline) without first looking at all the themes that come before it. Still, it is better to first complete Theme 1 before continuing with other themes.

Boys/girls, he/she, his/her ...

In the manual, sometimes we talk as if the child is a girl ("If a child wants something, she ... ") and sometimes we talk as if the child is a boy ("If a child wants something, he ... ") It makes no difference whether we use "he" or "she", or "him" or "her", or "his" or "hers": the statement should always be understood as applying equally to boys and girls.

Activities

- 1) Read the contents pages of the manual (pages i to ii above) to become familiar with what the various themes deal with.
- 2) Choose any one theme between Theme 2 and Theme 12 to see how it is structured.

TOPIC 1.2 Many children die very young – we have to do something about it

Introduction

Very many children die before they are one year old, often from diseases that could have been prevented, like diarrhoea, malaria, malnutrition, to mention just a few.

To reduce the number of deaths of young children, we must give them enough wholesome food. They also need the best possible basic care; they need love and support so that they can learn language, develop self-confidence and grow both physically and emotionally. They need an environment that is both safe and stimulating (interesting).

The government and communities must work together

Since Independence, Namibia's government has made many improvements, for example in water and electricity provision, infrastructure, basic health care and preschools. But there is still a lot more to do, and we, the mothers, fathers and caregivers of the nation, must also do our best to improve things.

The goals of this manual are:

- **knowledge:** provide the most important information on how mothers, fathers and caregivers can help young children;
- **commitment:** help you to decide to do your best to give every child the best start in life; and
- **action:** show how communities can do things together to create better conditions for their young children.



Activities

- 1) Discuss your experiences of the situation of the children in your community.
- 2) Discuss whether or not the three keys (**knowledge**, **commitment** and **action**) are relevant for improving the situation of the children in your community.

TOPIC 1.3 About the best start in life for children

Introduction

In Namibia, many children die before they are five years old, and many never go to school. Many children also suffer serious problems like malnutrition; not being immunised against common childhood diseases; not having access to safe drinking water or adequate sanitation; and physical or mental disabilities.

Clearly, we need to take a stand and change the way things are.

An integrated approach to early childhood

According to Namibia's **Early Childhood Development Policy**, childhood development should be seen as being “holistic”. This means that the various aspects of development, like health, nutrition, education and social and emotional well-being, cannot be separated from each other. Development and learning are ongoing processes that occur as a child interacts with people and objects in her environment. Children are thus active participants in their own development and learning.

Here are some extracts from “**For every child: Health, Education, Equality, Protection**” (ADVANCE HUMANITY, UNICEF, July 2003):

UNICEF urges leaders to adopt the integrated approach to early childhood

All children, their caregivers and communities must be ensured:

- primary health care;
- adequate nutrition; and
- safe water and basic sanitation.

All children must be:

- registered at birth;
- protected against violence, abuse and neglect; and
- provided with love and psycho-social care and support for their early learning.

All girls and women must be:

- ensured good nutrition and health care, education, family support and the fulfilment of all other rights.

...

A seven-fold return on investment: The best start in life for every child

What it takes:

Giving children the best start in life means ensuring them good health, proper nutrition and early learning. It means safe water and basic sanitation. It means protection from violence, abuse, exploitation and discrimination.

All these are imperatives (obligations, duties, responsibilities) and work best together.

...

Numerous studies have shown that every dollar invested in ensuring children the best start yields \$4 – \$7 return in the long run to children, their families and taxpayers.

Activities

- 1) Make a list of the things that all children should have (e.g. “safe drinking water”). In your own community, what proportion of children have these things? (All? Most? About half? Very few? None?)
- 2) Discuss what is being done in your community to help young children, and who is doing it.
- 3) Make a list of 10 things that you can do to help children in your community.

THEME 2

FOUNDATION FOR A HEALTHY START

AIMS

- **Knowing the importance of planning and timing the birth of a child**
- **Knowing how a woman should be supported during pregnancy**
- **Understanding the importance of getting skilled assistance during childbirth**
- **Understanding the importance of check-ups at the health clinic**
- **Recognising the warning signs for babies and mothers, and knowing where to seek help fast in an emergency**

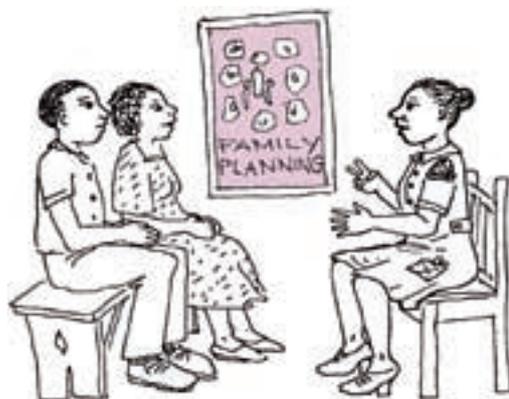
TOPIC 2.1 Plan and time the birth of a child

Introduction

Many children get a bad start in life because their birth was not well planned. Unplanned pregnancies can result in children being too small at birth; children not surviving; and children with disabilities. It is very important to plan the birth of a child so that it comes at the best possible time.

- 1) Pregnancy before the age of 18 increases the health risk for the mother and the baby. Childbirth is more likely to be difficult and dangerous for very young mothers, and their babies are much more likely to die in the first year of life. After the age of 35, the health risk begins to increase again.
- 2) After four pregnancies, there is a bigger health risk for the mother and the baby.
- 3) The risk of death for young children increases by nearly 50% if the space between births is less than two years. Because of the increased demands on the mother, both the new baby and the older child are at risk.
- 4) Every year, more than half a million women worldwide die from problems linked to pregnancy and childbirth. For every woman who dies, approximately 30 more develop serious, disabling problems.

A couple planning a child also needs to consider the work that both parents do, and the income that they get. The pregnant woman will need to rest more than normal during the pregnancy. She will need more bodybuilding foods like beans, eggs, fish or meat. It is also important to think about the costs of having a baby: food, clothes, schools fees, medical support, etc.



Family planning is important for avoiding unwanted pregnancies, and it is the responsibility of both men and women. There are many recommended methods of avoiding pregnancy. Get advice from your health clinic on the best family planning method or contraceptive for you.

Exclusive breastfeeding (i.e. giving the baby no food other than breast milk) can delay the return of the mother's fertility for approximately six months after childbirth. (This is effective in 98% of cases, and only if the woman's baby is under the age of six months, her menstrual periods have not returned, and the baby is breastfed on demand, and exclusively – i.e. it receives no other food or fluid, like fruit juice.)

Today, the HIV virus is a reality for all of us. Of the various contraceptive methods, only condoms and femidoms protect against both pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS. Couples should find out their HIV status before deciding to have a baby by visiting a "New Start Centre". They will receive counselling before and after the test from a trained counsellor. If a woman is HIV-positive, the counsellor will explain what the risks are for the baby, and tell her what she can do to prevent the spread of the disease to the baby.

Family planning is the responsibility of both men and women

Both men and women must take responsibility for preventing unplanned pregnancies. They should have access to information and advice from a health worker so that they are aware of the various methods of family planning that are available.

Information can also be obtained from a doctor, nurse, teacher or family planning clinic. (From "Facts for Life", 3rd edition, 2002)

See Topic 11.2 for more information on the role of fathers.

Activities

- 1) Make a list of things that a couple should think about before deciding to have a child.
- 2) Discuss all the points on your list with another person.



TOPIC 2.2 Safe pregnancies and deliveries

Introduction

Too many babies don't survive being born, and too many mothers fall ill or die during pregnancy and childbirth. In many cases, this can be prevented.

In Namibia, a pregnant woman and her partner should go to a hospital, health centre or clinic for antenatal (before birth) **check-ups at least four times during pregnancy**. A pregnant woman will also be given vitamin A, iron tablets and two injections to protect her and her baby against tetanus. She will be checked for any infections, especially urinary tract infections and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. The nurse/doctor will check that the foetus is growing properly and provide anti-malarial tablets if necessary.

Most HIV-positive pregnant women will also be offered the service called Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission of the HIV virus (**PMTCT**). Today, medicine is available that can reduce the risk of spreading the HIV virus from the mother to the child. A pregnant woman will be offered a simple blood test to find out if she is HIV-positive or not. This service is voluntary, but it is strongly recommended that she uses it, and that the father participates.

The woman will be counselled for the experience of childbirth and given advice on breast-feeding and caring for herself and her baby; she will be encouraged to give birth under the supervision of a doctor, nurse or midwife.

If possible, a pregnant woman should do less hard work and rest more than normal. It is important for her to eat vegetables, fruit and body-building foods (fish, meat, eggs or beans). Women need to take iodised salt to help prevent a miscarriage or disabilities in the child. (A swelling in the front of the neck might be a sign of an iodine deficiency.)

Good hygiene in the home is especially important for pregnant women. The unborn child can be damaged if the mother:

- smokes cigarettes or dagga, or is exposed to the smoke of other people;
- spends time in a smoky kitchen; or
- drinks alcohol or takes other drugs.

It is important to know where the nearest hospital or clinic is, and to have plans and money available for quickly getting the woman there at any hour. It is best to think about possible problems before they arise, and to find solutions while there is still time. If possible, while pregnant, the woman should move closer to the chosen clinic/hospital.

Going for assisted deliveries

Complications can arise during childbirth; many babies and pregnant women die during childbirth.

If a family knows that a birth is likely to be difficult or risky, they should arrange for it to take place in a maternity clinic or hospital.

All births, especially first births, are safer in a maternity clinic or hospital. If women who are giving birth are assisted by doctors, nurses or traditional birth attendants who are trained to help with safer childbirth, the lives of many babies will be saved.



Risk factors BEFORE pregnancy

The girl/woman:

- has given birth less than two years ago;
- is under 18 or over 35 years old;
- already has four or more children;
- has had a previous premature birth or a baby weighing less than 2 kilograms at birth;
- has had a previous difficult or Caesarean birth, or miscarriage or stillbirth;
- weighs less than 38 kilograms; or
- has experienced genital cutting or genital stitching to prevent sexual intercourse.

Warning signs

It is important for all families to be able to recognise the warning signs of problems during pregnancy and childbirth, and to have plans and resources for getting immediate skilled help if problems arise. The first delivery is the most dangerous for both mother and child.



Warning signs during pregnancy include:

- only gaining less than 6 kilograms;
- anaemia (“thin blood”), pale inner eyelids, often feeling very tired;
- unusual swelling of the legs, arms or face;
- the foetus moving very little.

Serious warning signs that need **immediate attention** from a doctor or nurse are:

- spotting or bleeding from the vagina;
- severe headaches or stomach-aches;
- severe or persistent (continuing) vomiting;
- high fever or severe pain;
- the water breaking before the expected time for delivery; and
- prolonged labour in connection with birth.



(From “Facts for Life”, 3rd edition, 2002)



Activities

- 1) Discuss how different members of the family can support a pregnant woman in the home.
- 2) Discuss why pregnant women should go for check-ups at a health clinic at least four times during her pregnancy.
- 3) Make a list of possible places and persons for getting assistance with childbirth in your area, including the nearest PMTCT service.
- 4) Make a realistic, detailed plan on a calendar for check-ups and childbirth for a local woman you know. Think about problems that might arise, and discuss ways of solving them.
- 5) Make a list of preparations to make for a birth. Compare your list with other people's lists, and discuss any differences. Then make a final list.

TOPIC 2.3 Taking special care of newborns during their first month



Introduction

The first month of a newborn's life is the most dangerous. We must do all that we can to prevent young babies from dying.

- 1) The mother should breastfeed the baby immediately after birth. The first breast milk contains a substance that protects the baby against infections. It is important to **know the HIV status of the mother**, however. See Topic 12.1 "Protecting babies from HIV infection"; speak to the nurse or doctor at the nearest clinic about voluntary counselling and testing (VCT), and Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) (see Topic 2.2 above).
- 2) Breast milk alone is enough for the baby for the first four to six months – do not give the baby any other food or water during this period, unless the doctor says there is a special reason to do so.
- 3) Remember that the mother still needs extra, nutritious food during the entire time that she is breastfeeding, and should rest more than usual.
- 4) Within five days of the birth, the mother and the baby should go to the health clinic for vitamin A and immunisations against polio.
- 5) Within six weeks of the birth, the mother should go for a postnatal (after birth) examination, and to discuss family planning and safe sex. It is best if the father can go together with the mother.
- 6) The mother must take extra care to keep the baby clean, warm and safe from illness, disease and infections.
- 7) Special care for a newborn baby: Use only surgical spirits to clean the umbilical cord until it drops off.



If there are any of the following **serious danger signs**, the mother and the baby should go to the health clinic without delay:

- The baby is sick: Smelly cord, constantly wet, yellow eyes, twitching, locked jaws, no weight gain, infection of the eyes or skin, problems with breathing, dehydrated, generally not alert.
- The baby has abnormalities: Poor muscle control, cleft palate, club foot, etc.
- The mother is sick: Pain, smelly or unusual discharge, excessive or continuous bleeding, swollen or soft uterus, unhealed or infected tears, etc.

Activities

- 1) Find out where postnatal care is available in your area.
- 2) Discuss the warning signs for the baby and the mother, and when to seek help.
- 3) Discuss the most important things to do to prevent a child from becoming sick in the first month of its life.

TOPIC 2.4 Planning for the whole child

Introduction

Mothers, fathers and caregivers need to take care of all aspects of the child. We should focus not only on the physical development of the body, but also on intellectual development, the development of language and the ability to reason, creativity, spiritual development, the expression of feelings and social development, which allows the child to interact with others.

All these elements of a child's development affect each other. If the child is well supported and stimulated in all areas, her overall development will be assisted. We need to understand these different elements, and realise that they are all interconnected.

Three stages of children's development

1) BIRTH TO THREE YEARS OLD

a) Development of the brain and senses

Over the first few months after birth, the baby's brain develops rapidly, and by the age of one year, it has doubled in size. In the early years of a child's development (from birth to three years), all learning takes place through the senses. A baby develops by looking, listening, touching, tasting and smelling.

What can parents and caregivers do?

Surround the child with things to touch, taste, feel, smell and see. The more stimulation a baby gets, the more active her brain will be. A baby needs stimulation, for example through song, speech and what is around her, what she can see – she should not just be strapped to her caregiver's back.



b) Development of emotions

Newborn babies only experience feelings of distress and contentment, but the area of the brain that governs emotions develops quickly. Soon the young child begins to experience more complex feelings like joy, sadness, jealousy, understanding and pride.

What can parents and caregivers do?

Cuddle with the baby (skin-to-skin contact) and talk to him, to provide him with the emotional stimulation he needs to develop in an atmosphere of loving care.



c) Development of movement

At birth, a baby's movements are jerky and uncontrolled, but by two months, she can already reach out and grab a nearby object, and around four months, she is beginning to focus both eyes on a single object. Soon she will be able to roll over and then sit up, crawl and walk.



What can parents and caregivers do?

Encourage the baby to roll, sit, crawl, stand and explore. Place interesting objects within her sight and/or hearing.

d) Development of language

Learning to talk is a very complex process. From about six months, a baby can recognise the different vowel sounds of speech. Around one year (but often quite a bit later), the baby amazes everybody by saying his first word! The first three years are the most important for learning language.

What can parents and caregivers do?

Babies must be exposed to language. They need to hear the sounds of their language many times before they can put them together. Talking and reading to a baby speeds up the process of learning new words, and also strengthens emotional bonds between the parent/caregiver and child.



2) THREE TO FIVE YEARS OLD

As the child gains experience, she is able to match pictures, objects and models to real objects in her world. She is beginning to understand who she is. Her attitudes, social habits and most other skills are being acquired.

What can parents and caregivers do?

Give the child a lot of love, attention and guidance, and opportunities for play and stimulation. Read, talk and sing to her.



3) ABOVE FIVE YEARS OLD

At this stage of development, actual experiences become more important. She needs to see and make things happen, and make decisions. She begins to think and reason about cause and effect, and to understand more advanced ideas. She will also begin to read and write.

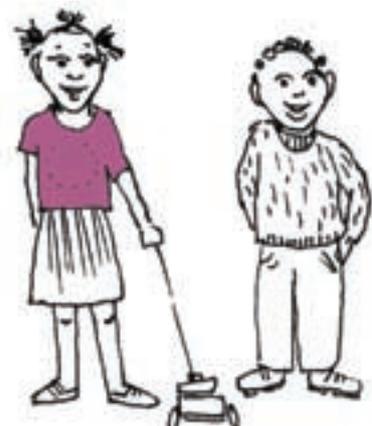
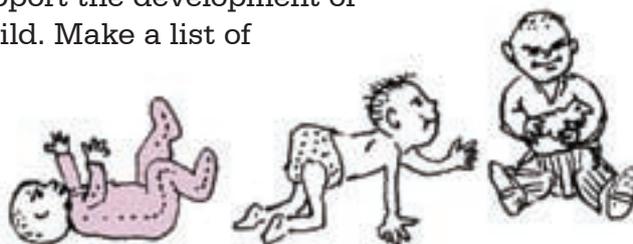
What can parents and caregivers do?

Encourage the child to choose activities and to discover through experimenting, testing and thinking about what has happened. Give her clear instructions to follow, and expect her to take responsibility for some things. Continue to supply love, support and encouragement.



Activities

- 1) Think about your own experiences of the stages of a child's development. Discuss if you agree with the suggestions about what parents and caregivers can do.
- 2) Discuss what mothers, fathers and caregivers can do to support the development of the whole child. Make a list of 10 important things to do.



THEME 3

CHILDREN'S NUTRITION AND HEALTH

AIMS

- ➔ Understanding what young children need in order to be healthy
- ➔ Understanding the importance of breastfeeding
- ➔ Understanding the importance of giving the child a variety of food every day
- ➔ Understanding the importance of vitamin A, and knowing where to find it
- ➔ Knowing how important immunisation is to protect children from serious illnesses
- ➔ Understanding the importance of measuring the growth of a child

TOPIC 3.1 What a young child needs to grow up healthy

Introduction

To grow up healthy, children need:

- a) **Proper food** for the age of the child
- b) **Clean water**
- c) **Preventative measures:**
 - immunisation
 - cleanliness
 - proper sanitation
 - control of malaria
- d) **A clean environment**
- e) **Treatment of worms**
- f) **A parent/caregiver who knows the warning signs** that something might be wrong, and then knows what to do



As a mother, father or caregiver, you need to be personally responsible for making sure that the children in your care have the best possible chance of being healthy. You need to make sure that they don't become sick from preventable diseases, and that they live in a safe environment.

Activities

- 1) Discuss how to promote good health. Give examples of children who have become sick, and why you think this happened.
- 2) Discuss problems that may make it difficult for people in your area to promote the good health of children, and possible solutions to these problems.

TOPIC 3.2 Why breastfeeding is best

Introduction

Breastfeeding is the best feeding method for a child during its first two years of life. Breast milk contains all the food that the child needs, and it protects the child against diarrhoea and other diseases. Children fed with breast milk are more likely to survive than children fed with milk formula.

Mothers should breastfeed their babies for at least four to six months, and give them no other food during this period. The best is to continue breastfeeding until the child is about two years old, while slowly adding other foods, especially green leafy vegetables and fruits. The mother also needs to eat more and have a varied diet while she is breastfeeding.

However, **a mother who is HIV-positive can infect her baby with HIV through breastfeeding.**

It is best for a pregnant woman to go for voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) for HIV (see Topic 2.1 and Topic 2.2 above). If she is HIV-positive, when the child is born, she can receive free medicine that will give the child a good chance of not becoming infected with HIV during birth.

An HIV-positive pregnant woman should consult the doctor or nurse for guidance about feeding her child. The options are:

- **only** use infant formula feeding or modified cow's or goat's milk; or
- **only** breastfeed for the first four months (**NO** other food), then suddenly stop breastfeeding and change to other feeding methods (see Topic 12.1 below).

Guidelines for feeding and caring for your baby from the Ministry of Health and Social Services

2 – 5 years	A mixed adult diet 3 main meals + 2 – 3 small meals
1 – 2 years	Breastfeeding + other foods Breastfeed at last 3 times a day Give more adult foods (at least 5 meals a day)
6 months – 1 year	Breastfeeding + soft foods Continue breastfeeding Soft foods by cup and spoon; add sugar and oil
4 – 6 months	Breastfeeding + porridge + fruit Start feeding the child on soft porridge and fruit juice Continue breastfeeding
From birth to 4 months	Breastfeeding only Breast milk is a complete diet for a baby for the first 4 months of life; breast milk also protects the child against diseases

Activities

- 1) Discuss the advantages of breastfeeding. Why will some mothers not want to continue to breastfeed a child for two years?
- 2) What should mothers who stop breastfeeding before the child is two years old watch out for?
- 3) Discuss why it is important for pregnant mothers to be tested for HIV.

TOPIC 3.3 Giving your child a variety of food – after breastfeeding

Introduction

A well fed child is healthy, strong and happy, and will grow and develop well. (Refer to the feeding guidelines in Topic 3.2 above.) It is not enough just to have a full stomach – a varied diet is important!

Every day, a child should get some:

- body-building foods (proteins) found in eggs, beans, peas, fish, meat and milk;
- energy-giving foods (carbohydrates) found in maize, mahangu, bread, sugar and rice;
- protective foods (vitamins and minerals) found in fruits, green leafy vegetables and orange and yellow fruits and vegetables; and
- a little oil, margarine and sugar.

If the child does not get the right types of food, he may become malnourished. He may get “marasmus” or “kwashiorkor”, which are both very dangerous.

All people should try to eat a variety of foods every day, especially vegetables, fruit, fish, beans and whole-grain products (NOT white bread). Being overweight or consuming too much salt or alcohol is not good. Safe drinking water is essential.

Every child needs vitamin A

- Without vitamin A, a child may become ill more easily and stay ill for longer, and so may not grow well.
- A lack of vitamin A can make a child blind.
- A child who has any sickness needs more vitamin A.

Children between nine months and five years grow very fast, and they need a lot of vitamin A.

What contains vitamin A?

- Breast milk
- Green leafy vegetables
- Orange and yellow vegetables and fruits
- Milk, cheese, butter, eggs, fish, liver and kidney



Hygiene and handling food

Before you prepare food for a young child, always first wash your hands so that you don't pass on any germs to him.

Anybody who has changed a nappy or used the toilet should wash his/her hands at once. Wash the hands of young children after they have been to the toilet, as well as before they eat.



Activities

- 1) Explain what is meant by a “variety of food”, why it is important, and how you can make a mixed, proper diet from food that is easily available in your area.
- 2) What might happen if a child does not get enough of the right types of food?
- 3) Discuss why children need vitamin A, and how to make sure they get enough.
- 4) Find out what traditional nutritious foods are easily available. Also discuss how you could grow some of these foods.

TOPIC 3.4 Taking your child for immunisation

Introduction

Immunisation means giving children vaccines that protect them against diseases. Children who are not immunised may die from measles, tetanus or whooping cough, or be disabled by polio.

Several vaccines are needed before a child is fully protected. It is important that all parents and caregivers know why immunisation is important, when and where their babies can be immunised, and how many times they should be immunised.

If an immunisation campaign is being run, parents and caregivers should take their child to one of the places where vaccinations are being given, even if she is malnourished or sick at the time. The child will be given a “Child Health Passport”.

Recommended vaccinations

Newborn babies: BCG (against tuberculosis and leprosy) and Polio 0

6 weeks: DPT 1 (against diphtheria, whooping cough and tetanus) and Polio 1

10 weeks: DPT 2 and Polio 2

14 weeks: DPT 3 and Polio 3

9 months: Against measles + vitamin A

A pregnant woman should be vaccinated against tetanus.

Activities

- 1) Find out about the current government policy on immunisation from the nearest hospital or health clinic.
- 2) Think about how you will convince parents to follow the immunisation guidelines.

TOPIC 3.5 Measuring the growth of your child

Introduction

A growing child is a healthy child. If a child gets sick, or does not get enough wholesome food, she may not grow well.

Until a child is three years old, it is important to take her to be weighed at the nearest health clinic every month. If she is between three and five years old, take her to be weighed every three months.

At the health clinic, they will keep a Child Growth Card for her. This will show if she is growing well, or if there is a problem. If she is not growing well, the health worker will help you to find out why, so that you can do something about it. It will help if you make a note of how you feed her, and of any illness she has had.

Important milestones in a child's growth

AGE IN MONTHS	MILESTONE
4½ to 9 months	Sits alone for at least one minute
9 to 18 months	Walks at least 10 steps
9 to 20 months	Can say 3 to 4 words
18 to 28 months	Talks in sentences of 3 to 4 words.

NOTE: Check the milestones on each visit, and take the child to the doctor if the milestones don't come in time.



Activities

- 1) Study a Child Growth Card from the nearest clinic.
- 2) Discuss why it is important to measure a child's growth, and how parents and caregivers can do this.

THEME 4

HYGIENE AND SANITATION

AIMS

- ➔ **Knowing why clean drinking water is important, and how to get it**
- ➔ **Understanding the importance of hygiene for children**
- ➔ **Understanding the importance of proper sanitation and knowing good, inexpensive sanitation solutions**
- ➔ **Promoting a clean environment for children to grow up in**

TOPIC 4.1 Drink only clean water

Introduction

Many families in Namibia collect water from rivers, lakes, oshanas or open canals, or they collect rainwater in containers. Even if it looks clean, this water is often full of germs that spread diseases like diarrhoea and worms that can kill you.



Only give young children clean and safe drinking water

There are different methods to make water clean before drinking it. Here we will mention two of them:

- 1) Boil the water for 5 – 10 minutes to kill the germs. This is an effective method that can be used in households, but it needs a lot of extra firewood, gas or electricity. After boiling the water, it must be left to cool where no child can get to it.
- 2) Disinfect the water with chlorine. Where there is a public water supply, this is done in big tanks. Exactly the right amount of chlorine must be added. It makes the water taste of chlorine, which is not so nice, but the water is safe to drink. You can get chlorine tablets to purify your water from the hospital.

Activities

- 1) Find out where the families in your area are getting water from, and whether or not it is safe to drink.
- 2) Ask a nurse or doctor how common water-borne diseases are in your area.
- 3) Discuss the two methods of cleaning water for drinking. Practice them in your own household, and then decide which you will promote in your area.

TOPIC 4.2 Sanitation and cleanliness promote good health



Introduction

What are germs?

- Germs are very small living things – too small to see without a microscope.
- Germs can make you sick.
- Germs grow quickly in warm, wet and dirty places.
- Some germs can float in the air.
- Germs grow well in places like:
 - human and animal faeces;
 - cuts and sores, and inside sick people;
 - teeth that have not been cleaned, unwashed bodies, and dirty hair and nails;
 - food that has been left uncovered, and rotting food;
 - dirty places in homes; and
 - rubbish pits and dirty toilets.

How germs get into your body

Germs get into your body when you eat or drink something which has germs on it, or if you have touched something dirty and then touch the food you are eating. Germs can also enter your body through your eyes, ears, nose, and skin (if you have scratches).

How to protect yourself and your children against germs

Wash your hands with soap (or ash) and water before you prepare food or eat, after you have visited the toilet (teach your child to do the same!) and after changing a nappy or cleaning the bottom of a baby or a child.

A child often puts his fingers into his mouth, so it is important to wash his hands several times a day. Clean your child's body and teeth every day; keep his nails and hair clean.

Many diseases, especially diarrhoea, come from the germs that grow in dirt, food and water, so it is important to keep knives, forks, spoons and surfaces where food is prepared as clean as possible. Raw food is often dangerous, so it is best to cook your food, and not to leave it uncovered for too long. If you are preparing raw vegetables, make sure that they are clean.

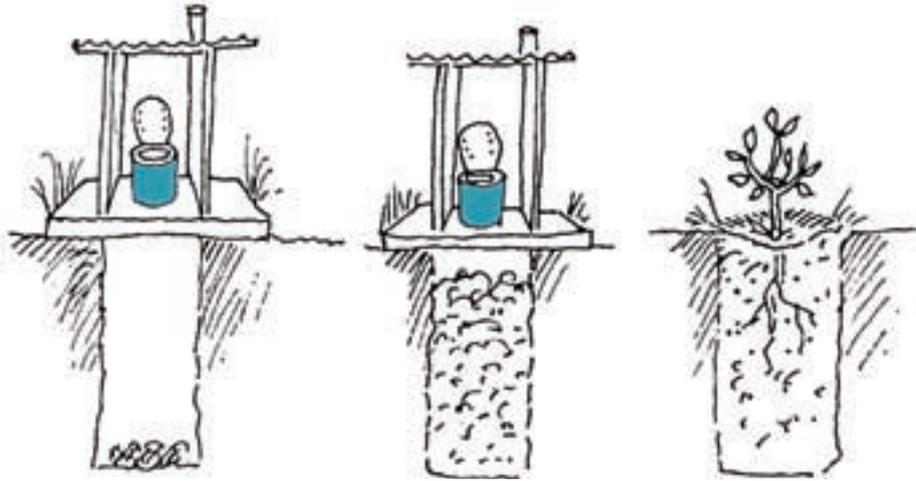
Germs are found in faeces, and they can quickly infect the entire family. Therefore, sanitation (getting rid of faeces safely) is very important. This can be done in several ways:

- Faeces from babies and small children should be cleared up immediately and thrown into the toilet, or buried. Caregivers must wash their hands after changing a baby's nappy.
- Faeces from animals must be kept away from the home, and away from water sources.
- Keep animals like goats away from the household and from areas where small children play. Keep their faeces away from water sources.
- Always use a toilet – this applies to both adults and children.
- If you don't have a hand washing system, it is important that you get one.

Two inexpensive, simple “eco-sanitation” toilet solutions

The tree loo

A shallow pit is made, and a light cement slab with a latrine is placed on top. When the pit is nearly filled up, a new pit is dug and the latrine is moved there. The old pit is filled up with soil, and a tree is planted in it. This system needs lots of available space.



Pit A → Pit B → Pit C → Pit D etc.

The alternating pit latrine

This system is good for areas with little available space. Two pits are made, which are used alternatively. When one pit is nearly filled, it is topped up with soil and left for at least one year, and the other pit is used. When this pit is nearly full, the first pit is dug out and used again. By now, the waste will have decomposed, and can be used as a valuable and safe fertiliser.

Pit A → Pit B → Pit A → Pit B etc.

- For both systems, the pits are shallow – 1.2 to 1.5 metres – instead of the usual deep pits.
- The users throw a mixture of soil and ash on top of the waste every time.
- From time to time, leaves and other parts of plants are thrown into the pit.
- The pit is used for only one year before moving to a new pit (in the case of the tree loo) or the other pit (in the case of the alternating pit latrine).

Advantages of eco-sanitation

- There is less risk of contamination of groundwater or surface water.
- A valuable compost is produced in the pit.
- With a tree loo, the waste does not have to be handled.
- There is less smell and less of a fly problem because of the added soil and ash.
- It is cheaper than a conventional “VIP latrine”.
- A papaya tree can be planted when the tree loo is full.
- It can be used in very sandy soils, where it is difficult to make deep pits.

Disadvantages of eco-sanitation

The community must be trained in how to make and maintain the pits. It also needs more attention – the pit must be neither too dry nor flooded, since the composting process stops in both cases.

Using a rubbish pit can prevent sickness

Germs can easily be spread by the flies that breed in rubbish like food leftovers. The family should have two pits for household refuse (rubbish, uneaten food scraps etc.) They should be two metres deep and situated at least 20 metres away from the house:

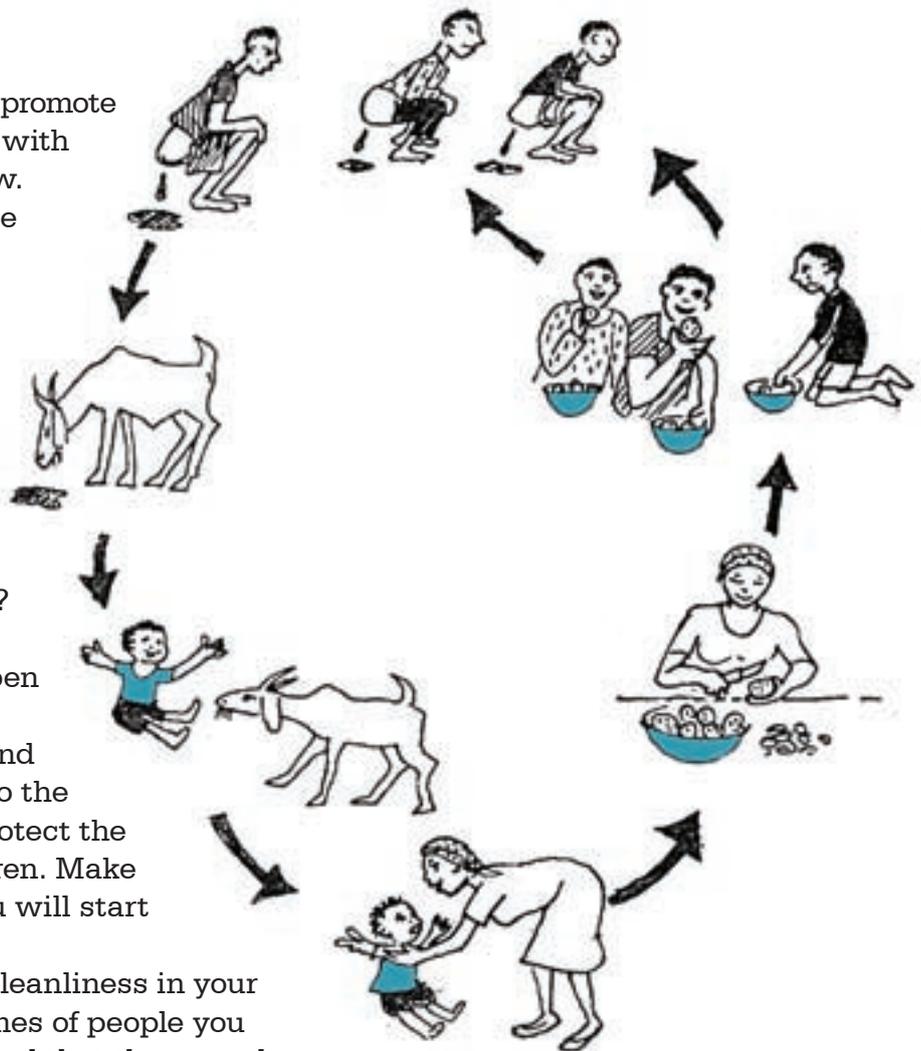
- one rubbish pit for things that can rot (food, ash, grass and plants) and turn into useful compost; and
- another rubbish pit for things that cannot decompose, like plastic, paper, metals and glass.



Keeping your house clean by sweeping and scrubbing floors, washing sheets and keeping the yard clean and tidy will help to control germs.

Activities

- 1) Discuss how you will promote personal cleanliness with the families you know.
- 2) Think of at least three practical ways of encouraging young children and adults to wash their hands.
- 3) Discuss the toilet situation in your area. How many families have toilets, and how many don't? Are there problems with people using open areas as a toilet?
- 4) Discuss short-term and long-term solutions to the problem of how to protect the health of small children. Make a list of 10 things you will start doing.
- 5) Discuss the level of cleanliness in your home, and in the homes of people you know. Are you satisfied that they are clean enough for children to grow up in? What can you do to improve the situation?



THEME

5

AVOIDING DANGEROUS ILLNESSES

AIMS

- ➔ Understanding and avoiding malaria, diarrhoea, worms, bilharzia and coughs and colds

TOPIC 5.1 Control malaria – get rid of mosquitoes

Introduction

Many young children die from malaria every year, and many more become sick and weakened by the disease. Malaria is also a very serious condition for adults.

Malaria is caused by the *Plasmodium* parasite. It is spread from one person to the next when a mosquito bites an infected person, and then goes on to bite someone else. This person is now also infected with *Plasmodium*.

The effects are felt about two weeks after infection. Malaria starts with a headache, chills and shivering, then a feverish, hot body, and maybe vomiting and diarrhoea. The body feels weaker and weaker, and parts of the arms and legs hurt.

If your child has these symptoms, you should immediately take her to the clinic for treatment. Malaria can be cured, but it is very dangerous if you don't get treatment soon.

Preventing malaria

- 1) Get rid of stagnant (not flowing) water wherever you can, because this is where mosquitoes breed. Also cut the grass around your house and keep your surroundings clean.
- 2) Sleep under mosquito nets which have been treated with a chemical that kills mosquitoes. Most post offices sell these nets.
- 3) Wear long sleeves and trousers in the late afternoon and at night, because this is when mosquitoes are most active.
- 4) Use mosquito repellent on your skin, particularly on your hands, neck, face and ankles, and burn mosquito coils in the bedroom at night. Use anti-mosquito spray to kill mosquitoes in the house.
- 5) Where there is a very high malaria risk, get advice from your clinic about anti-malaria tablets. (They reduce the effects of malaria, but they don't altogether prevent it.)

Activities

- 1) How many children and adults do you know who have had malaria in the past year?
- 2) Find out where the major breeding places for mosquitoes in your area are.
- 3) Discuss what you will do to avoid getting malaria yourself, and to reduce malaria in your area.



TOPIC 5.2 In case of diarrhoea

Introduction

Diarrhoea is one of the main causes of death for children under the age of five, but it can be prevented. If a child has diarrhoea, her body will not be able to absorb the food she needs to grow, and she will be more at risk of getting other infections. If the child has diarrhoea for more than two days, take her to the nearest clinic.

When a child has diarrhoea, breastfeeding should continue. The child must get lots of clean fluids, so give her only boiled water (see Topic 4.1 above). She should eat soft foods, and eat and drink more often than normal.



DANGER SIGNS – take the child to a clinic at once

- several watery stools within an hour, and blood in the faeces; and
- sunken eyes and a dry mouth.

Diarrhoea is easily spread through contact with faeces from animals or people. It can be prevented by maintaining a clean home environment and preventing contact with germs.

Activities

- 1) Study the prevention guidelines in the section “**How to protect yourself and your children against germs**” in Topic 4.2 above. Discuss whether or not the information given there is widely known in your area. Are the suggested prevention measures practiced in the community?
- 2) Discuss the most important messages that you will bring to families about diarrhoea, and what actions you will take to reduce it.

TOPIC 5.3 Treating worms is important

Introduction

The “worms” that infect people are found in water, faeces, rotting food and raw vegetables. It is very easy for a child to come into contact with the worm eggs, for example by touching the toilet floor or some infected soil. He might also not wash his hands after going to the toilet. Then he touches his food, and the eggs get into his stomach. Here the worms will grow by eating from the food that the child eats. He will not get all the nutrition he needs. He will become weaker and not grow properly, and be more at risk of getting other infections.

If you suspect that your child has worms, the whole family should go to the clinic for de-worming tablets. It is often recommended that all the members of a household take de-worming tablets twice a year.

From “10 rules of survival”

Common worms (“helminthes infections”) in humans are:

Pinworm

- *Signs:* itchiness around the anus *Treatment:* mebendazole (de-worming tablets)

Roundworm

- *Signs:* itchiness of skin, coughing, acute stomach pains
- *Treatment:* mebendazole (de-worming tablets)

Hookworm

- *Signs:* itchiness around the anus
- *Treatment:* mebendazole (de-worming tablets)

Tapeworm

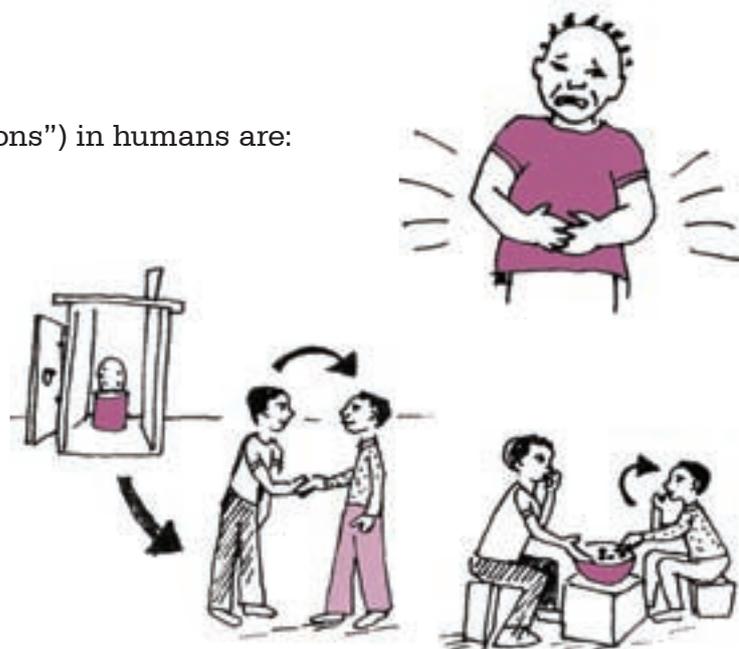
- *Signs:* few or no signs, but sometimes stomach discomfort, diarrhoea, anaemia; worms can be seen when discharged in faeces
- *Treatment:* niclosamide or praziquantel; common de-worming tablets not effective against these worms

Giardiasis

- *Signs:* slimy diarrhoea or large, ill-smelling stools; flatulence, stomach pains or weight loss
- *Treatment:* metronidazole 250 mg three times daily for 5 days

Activities

- 1) Are you aware of any children in your community who have been treated for worms over the past year?
- 2) Make a list of things you will do to prevent children from getting worms.



TOPIC 5.4 Preventing bilharzia

Introduction

Bilharzia is caused by a kind of worm that lives in water and gets into the bloodstream of human beings. It is very dangerous – organs like the kidneys and liver can be destroyed, and it can cause death, if not treated.

MAN → WATER → SNAIL → MAN

The eggs are in an infected person's urine. He urinates in the water. The eggs hatch and enter water snails. Worm larvae leave the snails and penetrate the skin of other people who are washing or swimming in the water. They move to the liver, then to the bladder and intestines, and settle down in small veins.

Signs of bilharzia

- blood in the urine, especially when passing the last drops;
- pain in the lower belly and between the legs, mostly at the end of urinating;
- low body temperature and itching; and
- scarring and thickening of the bladder or intestines and the liver.

Always go to the clinic or hospital if you have any signs of bilharzia – it can be treated. It is also important to eat well and maintain a healthy diet while recovering from bilharzia.

Preventing bilharzia

- Never urinate in or near to the water (oshanas, dams etc.)
- Always use toilets/latrines. Always boil drinking water.
- NEVER wash or swim in stagnant water – this is where the water snails are most common.
- Use protective clothes when irrigating crops or fishing in infected water.

Activities

- 1) Discuss which water places have bilharzia in your community; ask at the clinic/hospital.
- 2) Discuss what you think parents and caregivers should do to prevent children from getting bilharzia.



TOPIC 5.5 Coughs and colds can be serious

Introduction

The main sicknesses among young children under five in Namibia are coughs and colds. These are often followed by infections of the lungs, like pneumonia, which is the most common cause of death among very young children.

Prevent coughs and colds

The best way to prevent young children from getting coughs and colds and more serious infections is by feeding them well. This means breastfeeding babies (see Topic 3.2 above) and feeding older children a variety of foods, with Vitamin A (see Topic 3.3 above).

Keep children clean and make sure that they have a safe environment to play in. Also dress children well, especially in the winter, so that they don't feel cold, and take them for the recommended immunisations (see Topic 3.4 above).

Comfort sick children

If a child has a cough and a cold, you should comfort him, feed him more often than normal and give him more liquid to drink. Continue to breastfeed your baby. Make sure he is kept warm. If he has a runny nose, wipe it for him, or if he is old enough, teach him to wipe his own nose. Keep him away from smoke from cigarettes and open fires.

Look for warning signs and take the child to a clinic

If the cough and cold don't go away within a few days, you must take the child to a health clinic.

The warning signs for more serious infections are that the child:

- has a fever;
- has quicker breathing than normal;
- has difficulty in breathing; moves his lower chest or stomach in a different way to how he normally does;
- does not want to eat and drink; or
- is vomiting.

If your child shows any of these signs, or if the cough and cold last more than a few days, you must take him to a health clinic for an examination. If you are given medicine for him, follow the instructions very carefully. With antibiotic medicines, even if he feels better, you must continue with the medicine until the treatment has been completed.

Activities

- 1) Make a list of things a parent should do to prevent a child from getting coughs and colds.
- 2) Discuss how you will make caregivers and parents aware of the warning signs for serious infections.

THEME 6

CHILDREN'S PLAY

AIMS

- ➔ **Accepting that play is important for children**
- ➔ **Understanding how to effectively support children's play**
- ➔ **Getting ideas for toys and materials for children under three years old**

TOPIC 6.1 Young children need to play



Introduction

Play is a very important part of young children's learning. Through play, they explore the world around them and learn most of their early skills. Parents and caregivers should make sure that the child is safe and is having fun while learning through play. They should provide play materials, guidance and encouragement, but they also need to allow children to make their own discoveries.

Play takes many different forms, but it always stimulates the imagination. It gives children the opportunity:

- to practice different ways of thinking and acting;
- to experience a sense of achievement;
- to observe, concentrate and communicate; and
- to work through and overcome emotional problems.



Stages in the development of play

Children play in different ways as they grow and develop. Each stage is important for a child's development.

1) **Playing alone**

Very young children play on their own. They do not know how to share toys, understand rules of games or take turns. Older children may also enjoy playing alone. This is alright, as long as they do sometimes also play with other children.

2) **Playing side-by-side**

This is when two or more children play alongside each other, but play on their own.



3) **Playing with others (social play)**

This is when children interact with one another in a game. In social play, children learn skills like taking turns, following rules, winning and losing with dignity, etc.



Activities

- 1) Discuss types of play that you enjoyed as a child, and what you learnt from playing.
- 2) Discuss if parents and caregivers in your area understand the importance of giving children good opportunities to play. How could you raise their awareness of this fact?

TOPIC 6.2 How to support children's play

Introduction

Mothers, fathers and caregivers sometimes need to let children find out for themselves how to succeed, and not just tell them what to do.

The child learns by watching, listening and trying out things for himself, often things he sees others do. Some of the most important things a child can learn, such as kindness, responsibility and sharing, can only be taught by parents and caregivers by them setting good examples through their own actions. Through play, children learn about social rules such as right and wrong, and taking turns.

Types of play

Here are some suggestions for types of play that you can make available in your home for young children who can already walk on their own:

1) Sensory (messy) play

Provide children with old clothes. Use an area where the children do not have to worry too much about making a mess. Messy, sticky, squishy materials such as clay, water and sand give the children interesting experiences that will help to develop their senses of touch, sight and hearing. Teach the children to tidy up after themselves.

2) Imaginative play

Young children love to use their own imaginations, and they learn many new skills in the process. Through pretending to be another person, the child begins to imagine how it feels to be someone else. When imaginative play includes other children, it stimulates talk and enables the expression of a range of feelings.

For example, imagine a situation where three children are playing "house". After observing them for a while, the caregiver asks them what they are doing.

One says, "I am the mummy and she is the baby."

"Yes," another says, "and I am the auntie and we're cooking meat."

The caregiver could encourage their make-believe by saying, “It smells good, what have you put in it?” The children could then say that they have used many different ingredients, like pumpkin leaves, peanut butter, salt, milk, and so on, and then continue to add more ingredients. They may decide whose turn it is to stir the pot. They may decide that the baby is hungry, and then decide who should feed her, and what food to give her.



And so on ...

3) Exploring and experimenting

Children use all their senses to explore and make sense of their world. Sometimes both sensory play and imaginary play are involved. For example, a child may know that a ball bounces because she has played with balls. If she makes a ball out of clay, she may at first be surprised that it doesn't bounce, but as she experiments with it, she will realise that clay won't bounce, even if it is round like a ball – “This clay is too squishy to bounce,” she may conclude.



Activities

- 1) Discuss how parents and caregivers can inspire children to play.
- 2) Think of five different make-believe situations for children's imaginative play. Examples of such situations could be “Hiding from the storm,” or “Building a house”. How could you encourage children to enter into the make-believe world of each situation?
- 3) Make a list of 10 new ways in which you can encourage and help young children to play.



TOPIC 6.3 Toys and materials for play

Introduction

Children need things to play with to develop their senses and learn many skills. Children should be able to make choices from a variety of stimulating materials that occur in their environment, and then use them to make new things. For this, children need things like:

- practical, everyday objects, like pots, or a comb, or a broom, which can become anything a child can imagine;
- natural materials, (seed pods, mahangu stalks etc.) and “junk” materials (empty cardboard boxes, bits of metal or plastic etc.);

- heavy, large objects, like large wooden or cardboard boxes; and
- plastic bottles filled with sand, small stones or seeds that can make different sounds.

Safe toys

Small babies put things into their mouths to investigate them, so they need bigger things that they cannot swallow, and soft, round things that will not cut them.

Toys must be clean. Have a place to store toys, like a box or bag, so that they don't get dirty while not being used. Toys should be washed regularly with soap to prevent germs.



Activities

- 1) Think of 10 differences there might be between children who have things to play with, and children who don't.
- 2) Make a long list of easily found things to play with. Divide the list into good things for young babies under a year old; for children from one to two years old; and for children from two to three years old.
- 3) Discuss how you will encourage parents and caregivers to make sure that children get more things to play with.



THEME 7

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

AIMS

- ➔ Understanding children's rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child

TOPIC 7.1 The Convention on the Rights of the Child

Introduction

The Convention on the Rights of the Child has been ratified (accepted) by every country in the world except two. It treats children's rights as being central to universal human rights.

By ratifying this convention, national governments have committed themselves to protecting and ensuring children's rights. The Convention spells out the basic human rights of children everywhere, without exception. These are the rights:

- to survival;
- to develop to their full potential;
- to protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation;
- to participate fully in family life; and
- to participate fully in cultural and social life.

The convention protects children's rights by setting standards in health care, education and legal, civil and social services.

The progress made in any country can be measured against these standards. In addition, two Optional Protocols have been adopted:

- on the involvement of children in armed conflict; and
- on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.



Rights and responsibilities go hand-in-hand.

Children have the right to:	Children have the responsibility to:
be loved and protected	show love and respect to others
make mistakes	learn from their mistakes
a safe and healthy environment	keep their environment safe and clean
receive quality medical treatment	look after themselves
be taken seriously	listen to others
get special treatment under abnormal circumstances	always give of their best
enjoy healthy meals	not waste food
be proud of their heritage	respect the cultures of others
receive good quality education	study and respect their teachers

Developed by the Grow Early Learning Trust

Activities

- 1) Discuss why it is important that almost all countries have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- 2) Discuss how well you think Namibia is doing in guaranteeing the children's rights defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- 3) Discuss what you in your family and in your community can do to protect the rights of children.



THEME

8

CHILDREN DEVELOPING TO THEIR FULL POTENTIAL

AIMS

- ➔ Finding out what it means for a child to develop to her full potential
- ➔ Finding out what is needed for this to happen

Topic 8.1 The meaning of children developing “to their full potential”

Introduction

If a child “develops”, it means that she shows a steady improvement in all areas. If she is given all the support that parents or caregivers possibly can – maximum support – then she will develop to her “full potential”.

Potential differs from child to child, even though there are some things that all children have in common. Different children have different talents, and achieve milestones at different times.

Maximum support is a lot of things. One basic thing is that the children are fed well with a variety of food, and protected from diseases, so that they are healthy.

Maximum support also means that children feel safe and happy, and are encouraged to talk and use their bodies. Children need to be stimulated through hugging and being loved, through playing and being told stories. This will allow them to become able, self-sufficient, happy and as kind as possible.

Parents and caregivers must create a safe environment where the child can play. Dangerous things like matches and chemicals must be put out of reach, and the environment must be kept clean.



Areas of a child's development that can be helped through early stimulation and learning activities

(Stimulation means inspiration, motivation, encouragement)

- 1) **Movement, body control, strength and balance**
- 2) **Use of hands**
- 3) **The senses** (seeing, hearing and feeling)
- 4) **Communication** (listening, understanding, learning to speak)
- 5) **Interaction with other people**
- 6) **Basic aspects of daily living** (eating, drinking, dressing and control of the bowel and the bladder)
- 7) **Observing, thinking and doing**



Activities

- 1) Discuss what the "full potential" of different children you know might be. In what ways are the children different?
- 2) Discuss what mothers, fathers and caregivers should do to help their children develop to their full potential.
- 3) Make a list of 10 new, easy and good pieces of advice to give to parents and caregivers that they might not usually think of.



THEME 9

DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF DEVELOPMENT

AIMS

- ➔ **Understanding and supporting a child's emotional, intellectual, language, social and creative development**

TOPIC 9.1 Supporting emotional development



Introduction

Emotional development is about feelings – knowing and understanding about feelings, about oneself and other people, and about the world in which we live.

It is the home that gives children feelings of confidence, self-esteem (liking of self) and independence (feeling able to do things without help). Each child needs to feel loved, valued, respected and trusted. Each child has her own talents and character strengths and weaknesses. It is best not to compare children with other children, as this can damage their confidence.

a) **The child's feelings about herself**

- Encourage the child to talk about herself.
- Encourage her to acknowledge her personal skills and qualities: "I am good at ... ," "I enjoy ... ," etc.
- Have confidence in her. As far as possible, allow her to try out things for herself so that she learns to be independent.

b) **Expressing her feelings**

- Notice and accept her feelings.
- Help her to put her feelings into words.
- Use drawings, stories, puppets and even masks to help her to explore her feelings. Use words that relate to those feelings: "jealous", "happy", "shy" etc.

c) **The child's awareness of other people's feelings**

Help the child to appreciate how other people are feeling, for example if they get hurt. This helps to develop understanding and cooperation.

Activities

- 1) Discuss how you can help a child to express her feelings, and become aware of other people's feelings.

TOPIC 9.2 Supporting intellectual development

Introduction

Intellectual development is the development of the mind. Intellectual skills guide our behaviour and make it possible for us to learn, and to make sense of all the information, experiences and ideas we take in. It involves problem-solving skills and the ability to reason. Always remember that each child develops at his own pace, but all children need recognition and praise.

The child develops ideas or concepts through doing things (touching, exploring, experimenting etc.); observing things (naming, comparing, remembering etc.); thinking about things (sorting, analysing etc.); and communicating (questioning, interpreting, explaining etc.).



Activities

- 1) Discuss how you will advise others to support the intellectual development of children. Make five practical suggestions.

TOPIC 9.3 Supporting language development

Introduction

Language development is at the core of being human. Language helps us to compare things and put them into groups. It makes it possible for us to remember past experiences and to pass on our culture.

When a baby is born, she can only communicate by crying or moving her body. The development of language depends first of all on the home environment – she must continually hear language being used, so that gradually she will begin to understand words, and to be able to express herself.

How can parents and caregivers help to develop their children's language?

In order to develop a child's language skills, you need to encourage her to speak and listen. Talk a lot to a child, repeat words and sentences, and answer her questions.

When you speak to her, talk in a serious way, not in "baby talk". She needs to hear the real words of her mother tongue, in meaningful sentences.



You also need to encourage her to listen. You can do this by talking to her, and telling or reading stories for her. Listen to her each day and respond – show a genuine interest in what she tells you.

Whenever possible, look at objects in the environment and talk about them – look at books, stories, pictures, things in nature or in the cooking area with the children. Encourage children to name things they see and to talk about what they are doing, and why they are doing it.

Answer her questions at her own level of understanding. Do not confuse her with complicated words or ideas. Reward her with praise, and encourage her to use her language and think creatively. Ask her “open questions” (“What will happen if ...?”, “What’s happening?”) rather than questions which invite only “Yes” or “No” answers.

Activities

- 1) Discuss how you will support the language development of children. Make five practical suggestions.

TOPIC 9.4 Supporting social development

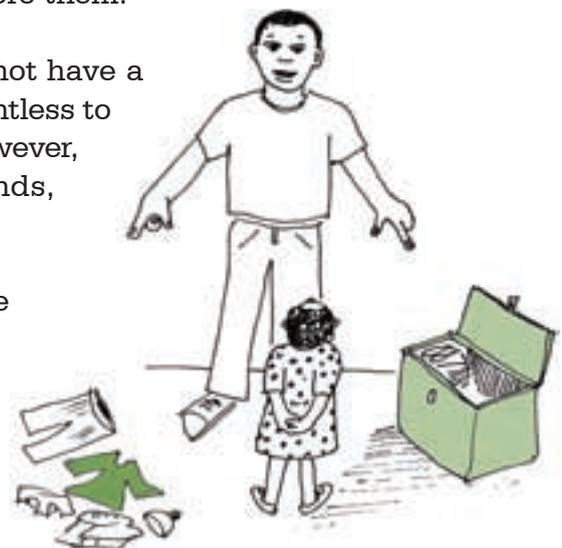
Introduction

Social development refers to the values and attitudes that children learn from their families and the community.

Parents and caregivers are the first social and moral teachers – this is where children learn about right and wrong. Children need good role models to copy. They need to see adults talking, showing affection and helping each other, not fighting or shouting. They need adults to listen to them, rather than always to ignore them.

From birth to about the age of three, children do not have a real sense of right and wrong behaviour, so it is pointless to punish them for their “bad” behaviour. Gradually, however, influenced by their parents, caregivers and friends, children form ideas of right and wrong.

Social development is extremely important because it influences how children value themselves and others. They learn to be part of a family or a group, and ultimately to understand the customs and values of their cultures.



Encourage children to be helpful

Being helpful is an important part of living in any community – whether you are three or sixty-three. At an early age, you can teach a child to be helpful by letting him help you to carry small things around and put them where they belong. Even if it is not “real” help that he is giving, praise him for wanting to be helpful.

When children get into a disagreement, for example about who may play with a toy, help them to sort out the problem – encourage sharing and a sense of fairness. Sometimes an older child will have to learn to give in to a younger child, who may not yet understand sharing. If they are both too young to understand, you can try to get them interested in something else instead.

Activities

- 1) Discuss examples of children you know who have interacted with other children in good ways and in undesirable ways, and analyse why they interacted as they did.
- 2) Make a list of five ways in which you, as a mother, father or caregiver, can be a good role model for a child.

TOPIC 9.5 Supporting creative development

Introduction

Creative development is the development of the ability to have new ideas, or to think about something in a new or different way.

To be creative, you need imagination – the ability to think of how things could be, rather than how they are. Imagination is an important part of intellectual/cognitive development. Creative people are inventive – they can think of many ways to solve the same problem.

You may recognise creativity in a child by unusual things he makes, or different ways he uses objects or does something, or the drawings he makes, or the way he plays – creativity can be expressed in many, many ways. Always encourage creativity when you see it.



Children should be able to play freely with a variety of things as this helps them to develop their creativity. There isn't only one way to play with toys – the more ways a child plays with a toy, the more he will learn. A box can be a room in a house, a car, a boat, a drum ... there is no limit to the possibilities.

Creativity can also be expressed through painting, singing, dancing, acting ... let the child experiment. Give him a chance to explore different sorts of creativity and artistic expression.

Activities

- 1) Discuss examples of how children may look at the same thing in different ways.
- 2) Discuss what advice you will give to parents about how they can support the creative development of their children.

THEME 10

GOOD BEHAVIOUR AND DISCIPLINE

AIMS

- ➔ Discussing what good behaviour is
- ➔ Encouraging children to behave well
- ➔ Building the child's self-confidence
- ➔ Discussing what good discipline is
- ➔ Dealing with behaviour problems



TOPIC 10.1 Encouraging good behaviour

Introduction

Here are some tips on encouraging good behaviour:



1) Routines are helpful

Children need to know what is expected of them at different times of the day. A daily routine helps children to feel positive and secure. Let them know what to expect – preparing food, eating, cleaning, playing etc.

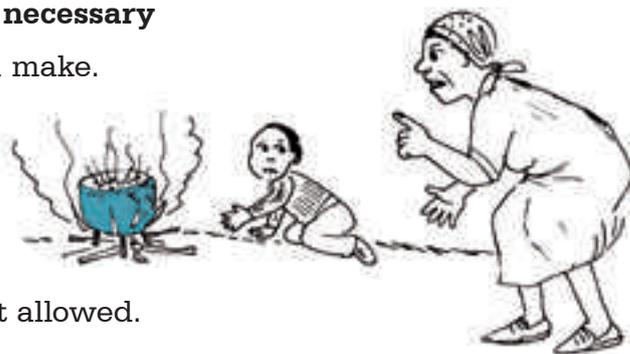
2) Be a good role model

Children learn attitudes by observing adults. If we behave badly, they will too, but if we treat them with respect, they will learn to show respect to others. If we remain calm and use words to show we are disappointed, they will learn to express their feelings without being aggressive.

3) Have a few simple rules that really are necessary

Explain the reason behind the rules you make. Remind young children of the rules, as it is easy for them to forget. Rules should be clear and simple, for example:

- Touching the stove and the pots is not allowed.
- Breaking toys and other things is not allowed.
- Hurting each other is not allowed.



4) **The adult must set the limits**

It is normal for children to test limits. A two-year-old may at first refuse to let an adult hold his hand while crossing the road. However, it is important for the adult to remain calm, be firm and not give in.

5) **Avoid saying “Don’t do that!” – rather tell children the right things to do**

As far as possible, instead of telling a child about bad things he must not do, make suggestions about the right things he should do. For example, say, “Come and help me put away these toys,” rather than “Don’t leave your toys lying around.”

Activities

- 1) Discuss what “good behaviour” is.
- 2) Think of five examples of common mistakes that parents and caregivers make when they try to get children to behave well. Discuss the examples.
- 3) Think of five examples of ways of encouraging good behaviour. Discuss the examples.

TOPIC 10.2 Building self-confidence

Introduction

As a mother, father or caregiver, you want the child in your care to be self-confident, because self-confidence is an important part of being happy. Here are some ways of building up self-confidence in a child:



- **Children learn through love and encouragement**

If you are a kind and enthusiastic person, your happiness will be passed on to the children in your care. You should praise her honestly, for the effort she makes, for being creative, for any positive behaviour like sharing or helping someone else.

- **Forgive and forget**

A child is more likely to behave well if she is confident that her parent or caregiver will accept her, even if she does sometimes make mistakes.

- **Do not be over-protective**

All children sometimes have problems with other children. As an adult, sometimes you will have to let them solve their problems on their own, without interfering.

- **Make it possible for the child to do what is expected of her**

If a child feels a task is too difficult, she may lose confidence, and end up feeling bad about herself. So it is important that any tasks she is given are not too difficult. Children have different skills, and develop differently. Focus on what the child is good at, not on things she struggles with. Accept that children learn different things at various times, in different ways, and at different speeds. Never call a child stupid. And if a child is clever, praise her for her effort, not the fact that she is clever.

Activities

- 1) Discuss what it means if a person lacks self-confidence, and how it helps a person to have self-confidence.
- 2) Discuss how you will encourage parents to build up self-confidence in their children.

TOPIC 10.3 Good discipline

Introduction

Children will not normally or deliberately want to create problems for parents and caregivers. Busy and interested children just won't have the time to get into trouble, but children who are bored will get into fights, tease other children or do things they know they aren't allowed to.



Bad behaviour, or just clumsiness?

If children know what they may and may not do, they will normally respect it. For example, young children like to run around wildly without always thinking about what might happen. They need to be shown where they can run and play freely, and where they should not play.

Before you talk to a child about something wrong that he has done, think carefully if the act was deliberate bad behaviour, just clumsiness, or testing the limits.



Good discipline is fair and consistent

If a child has done something bad and you feel that you must give him some punishment, give the same punishment each time for the same wrongdoing, and make the punishment appropriate to the wrongdoing. For example, if he has not followed the rules about how to play with certain things, the punishment could be that he is not allowed to play with them for a while.

Never punish too severely – this will make the child lose confidence and self-esteem. Physically or verbally attacking a child frightens him, and will have the effect of damaging his character, rather than correcting his mistakes. He will forget his mistake and only remember the punishment. Being beaten leaves children with feelings of anger and humiliation, and often they will want to regain their self-esteem by attacking others.

Activities

- 1) Discuss what good discipline is, and how to teach it to children.
- 2) Discuss whether you ever need to punish a child, and if you do, for what wrongdoings?

TOPIC 10.4 Dealing with problems

Introduction

As a mother, father or caregiver, you will almost certainly experience problems with your child's behaviour at some time or another. This is perfectly normal. It is your task to be patient and consistent. As the adult, you need to teach her how to deal with challenges and frustrations.

For example, a young child may misbehave by throwing sand at other children. Here are some suggestions:

- 1) Warn the child that if she throws sand, she could lose her chance to play with it.
- 2) If she continues, interrupt her anti-social play by removing her from the sand for a short time.
- 3) Discuss thoughts, feelings and rules. If the child shows anger at what you have done, recognise her feelings, but explain that throwing sand could hurt someone's eyes.
- 4) When she calms down and shows that she is ready to go back, go with her and help her to settle down.
- 5) If the bad behaviour is repeated, do not allow her to play in the sand. Ask her to think of something else that she can do.
- 6) If the child is old enough to understand, you could also encourage her to think about why she was upset in the first place, and of different ways of dealing with her problem.



Activities

- 1) Mention three common problems you have experienced with young children, or have seen other parents/caregivers experiencing with their young children. What was done about these problems? Did the action that was taken work? Why did it work, or not work?
- 2) Discuss three simple pieces of advice that you can give to parents and caregivers about how to correct their children's behaviour.

THEME 11

BOYS AND GIRLS IN A SAFE HOME ENVIRONMENT

AIMS

- Treating boys and girls equally
- Discussing the role of fathers as parents and caregivers
- Creating a safe home environment for play



TOPIC 11.1 Give the same attention to boys and girls

Introduction

Traditionally, boys have received more attention than girls. In the home, they are still usually given fewer household jobs. But boys and girls have the same rights, and they should be treated equally.

Here are some examples of what you can do:

- 1) Give equal attention to girls and boys.
- 2) Expect the same from girls and boys and treat them the same.
- 3) Like girls, boys also need to express their feelings.
- 4) Girls can play with wire cars and boys can play with dolls.
- 5) Encourage both boys and girls to help in the household.

If girls are treated in the same way as boys and get the same educational opportunities, they will develop to their full potential, and in time become better mothers and community members.

Even when children are less than three years old, they need to enjoy equal treatment and equal opportunities.

Activities

- 1) Discuss how boys and girls were treated differently when you were a child.
- 2) Discuss how boys and girls are treated differently today in your community, and if there have been changes since your childhood.
- 3) Discuss how you think families should treat boys and girls.
- 4) Make a list of 10 things parents can do to promote equal treatment for boys and girls. Discuss your list.

TOPIC 11.2 The role of fathers

Introduction

Just as boys and girls have equal rights, mothers and fathers also share the responsibility for giving every child the best start in life. It is naturally the mother who will carry the baby, give birth, and, at least for the first years, breastfeed and care for her most of the time. But the support that fathers can give is extremely important.



Fathers need to understand the importance of having two years between childbirths. They should never put pressure on their partners to have another child too soon (see Topic 2.1 above). They should discuss which birth control method to use with the mothers of their children.

During the pregnancy, the father-to-be should help as much as possible to allow the mother-to-be to have a lighter workload and more time to rest. He can give good support by going with his pregnant wife/partner to health checkups, and by taking part in counselling and testing for HIV. After the birth, the father needs to support the mother and the baby, both practically and emotionally.

Ideally, every child would enjoy the love, care and support of both the mother and the father. Of course, many fathers work far away from where their children are growing up. Then the fathers and mothers need to make a special effort during holidays and over weekends so that the fathers can be actively involved in parenting.

Interviews conducted with women suggest that in Namibia:

- Men often play an active role in caring for sick children, especially regarding decision-making and making arrangements to take children to a clinic or hospital.
- Men are often not willing to openly discuss family planning with their partners.
- Often, men do not take an active part in the care and upbringing of their children because they work far from home.
- Many men feel uncomfortable around babies and children under three years old, because they lack experience in handling and interacting with such young children.

So the question is: What must we do to get fathers to be more involved in caring for and bringing up their children?

Activities

- 1) Discuss the father's role in supporting his pregnant wife or partner.
- 2) Discuss the father's role in family planning and using contraceptives.
- 3) Why do you think it is difficult to convince fathers to take HIV tests together with their pregnant partners. How can we solve these problems?
- 4) Discuss how a father working and living far from home can support his partner and his child.
- 5) Discuss how mothers can help fathers to be more active in caring for and bringing up their children.

TOPIC 11.3 Make a safe home environment

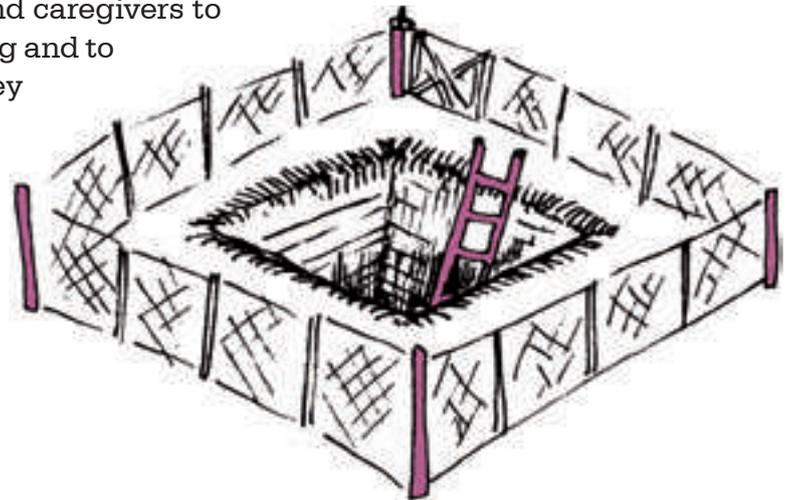
Introduction

A safe environment means a place where children will be safe from harm. Some dangers, like fires and sharp knives, are visible, but others, like germs and mosquitoes, are serious, even though they can't be seen. A play area should be kept clean, and animals should be kept away from it. Children also need to be able to wash their hands often (see Topic 4.2 above). Getting rid of mosquitoes is also very important (see Topic 5.1 above).

SOME VISIBLE DANGERS	CONSEQUENCE
open fires in kitchen areas, boiling water, hot food	burning
water holes, oshanas, canals, wells and rivers	drowning
knives, glass that can break	cutting
medicines that a child might swallow	poisoning
fuel, oil and household chemicals	poisoning

It is the responsibility of parents and caregivers to know what young children are doing and to keep them away from harm. As they grow older, they must be taught important safety rules. They need to understand what is safe to touch, and what is not.

Remember that making a safe environment is the responsibility of both male and female adults.



Activities

- 1) Discuss what major safety problems there are in the homes in your area.
- 2) Make a list of things that should be done to make safe playing areas. Which are the most important?

THEME 12

CHILDCARE AND HIV/AIDS

AIMS

- **Knowing the Namibian reality of mothers with HIV/AIDS**
- **Knowing how to protect babies against HIV**
- **Taking control of HIV in your own life**
- **Living positively with your children, in spite of HIV infection**
- **Respecting the traditional roles of extended families**

TOPIC 12.1 Protecting babies from HIV infection



Introduction

Namibia has one of the highest HIV infection rates in the world. With all the AIDS awareness campaigns and programmes aimed at curbing the spread of the pandemic, we should all know about it. AIDS is here amongst us, and there is no point in denying it. It is the duty of every parent and caregiver to know his or her own status, and to act appropriately.

Babies are at risk of getting the HIV virus from their HIV-positive mothers. In Namibia, about one-fifth of pregnant mothers are HIV-positive. There is a risk that these mothers will pass on the HIV infection to their babies either before or during childbirth, or through breastfeeding. However, it is possible to substantially reduce the chances of this happening.

Prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) at hospitals

The PMTCT programme is run at most hospitals in Namibia. The pregnant mother-to-be and her partner are invited for voluntary counselling and testing (VCT), to find out if the mother-to-be is HIV-positive. If she is, she will be offered antiretroviral medicines around the time of delivery to prevent transmission of the HIV virus to the child. The mother will still be HIV-positive, but she can learn how to live longer with HIV.

It is possible, but not certain, that the baby will be infected with HIV if he is breastfed. So one option is not to breastfeed at all, and to give the baby only infant formula feeding or modified cow's or goat's milk. However, it is likely that at some point, some breastfeeding will take place.

But if the mother is HIV-positive, **mixing breastfeeding and other forms of feeding is the most dangerous thing to do**. Even if it may be possible for the parents to avoid breastfeeding, the Ministry of Health and Social Services strongly recommends **exclusive breastfeeding** for the first four to six months as **the best option**. If this option is chosen, it is essential that the baby is given nothing except breast milk, not even water, and that when other food is introduced, breastfeeding stops at once – there must be no mixing of breastfeeding and other forms of feeding (see Topic 3.2 above).

Activities

- 1) Discuss the realities of HIV/AIDS in your area, and how it affects the community.
- 2) Discuss how parents can help themselves and their children by taking an HIV test, and how you can encourage parents to go for testing.
- 3) Make sure that you know how to access VCT and PMTCT services in your area.
- 4) Discuss how you will convince pregnant mothers to use the PMTCT service.

TOPIC 12.2 Parents and caregivers taking control of HIV

Introduction

It is possible for people themselves to take control of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, by preventing infection, or if infected, by managing the disease and living positively.



If you do not know your HIV status:

- 1) Go for voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) at a health clinic, hospital or New Start Centre. Convince your partner to go with you.
- 2) If you have not been tested, assume that you may be HIV-positive, and always take precautions.

If you believe that you are HIV-negative:

- 1) Go for VCT together with your partner, so that you can both know for sure.
- 2) Continue to avoid HIV infection.

If you know that you are HIV-positive:

- 1) Join an organisation that promotes living positively with HIV.
- 2) Learn how to boost your immune system, and avoid stress.
- 3) Join a PMTCT programme if you are pregnant.
- 4) Regularly monitor your CD4 count, and join an AIDS treatment programme when it becomes necessary.
- 5) Decide how to let your friends and family know about your HIV status.



Activities

- 1) Discuss why it is important to take responsibility for HIV/AIDS in your own life. How will this have a positive effect on your children?

TOPIC 12.3 Live positively with your children – in spite of HIV

Introduction

A person who knows that he/she is HIV-positive can stay healthy for a long time, provided that he/she is aware of his/her status and consults a doctor for advice. The doctor will also say when he/she should start taking antiretroviral treatment.



Following some basic rules for daily living with HIV will help all HIV-positive people – both adults and children – to live longer.

Basic rules for living with HIV

The rules are described here in brief. In other tasks of this manual, there is more detailed information on most of the rules.

- 1) Drink only clean water.
- 2) Avoid worms – get regular treatment against them.
- 3) Eat enough, and make sure that you get a variety of foods from all food groups (see Topic 3.3. above). Eat food with vitamins.
- 4) Ask your doctor about how to maintain your weight and strength.
- 5) Take precautions to avoid diseases like tuberculosis (TB) and malaria. Get treatment if you are ill.
- 6) Avoid infecting anyone else with HIV through unprotected sexual intercourse. Avoid re-infection – even if you are already HIV-positive, another HIV infection will weaken you.
- 7) Make sure that nobody comes into contact with your blood.
- 8) Maintain good personal hygiene and keep your home and surroundings clean.
- 9) Comprehensive ARV treatment: ask your doctor about the best treatment for you.

Activities

- 1) Discuss how you can apply the rules of survival in your own home.
- 2) Discuss how you can encourage parents and caregivers to get this information and start putting it into practice.

TOPIC 12.4 Extended families facing new challenges

Introduction

Most families in our country have traditionally been prepared to help other relatives in many ways, for example by caring for children who need to live closer to school during school terms, by helping to take care of sick family members and nursing them back to health, or by bringing up children whose own parents have died. This is called the extended family.

It is very important that the children left with only one parent, or with no parents, have a place in the extended family where they belong, where they can be comforted and cared for.

Because of HIV/AIDS, however, so many parents now become sick and die. This is placing severe economic and emotional strain on extended family members, who must look after the orphaned children and share affection, attention, food, material goods etc. with them.

The extended families will need to look at their new situation as positively as possible, and find ways of helping each other within the family, so that all family members – depending of their age and abilities – contribute to the functioning of the family.

More food production (e.g. vegetable gardens, fruit trees) should be promoted at homes to secure enough health-giving food. Very young children will need to be cared for by the adults in their extended families. This is a good investment, however, as it will lay the foundations for developing healthy and bright children, who will be able to contribute to the needs of the extended family when they grow up.

Activities

- 1) Discuss the good things about traditional extended families.
- 2) Discuss what extended families can do to help themselves cope with the increased load they must bear because of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.
- 3) Ask your local Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare office for practical advice on supporting OVCs (Orphans and Vulnerable Children).



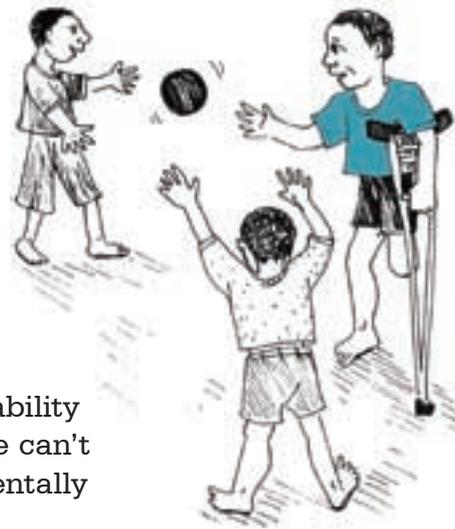
THEME 13

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

AIMS

- ➔ Giving children with disabilities special care and assistance, and the same opportunities as other children
- ➔ Realising the importance of having a positive attitude towards those who are different
- ➔ Protecting children from the various forms of child abuse

TOPIC 13.1 Focusing on children with disabilities and special needs



Introduction

There are children with some sort of physical or mental disability in all communities. Some children are blind or deaf; some can't walk properly, or are completely paralysed; some are mentally challenged.

These children need and deserve as much love and stimulation as any other child. They need to interact with other children who don't have disabilities. All children benefit by learning qualities like tolerance, helpfulness and respect for others.

If your child has a disability, don't be ashamed of her. Focus on her strengths, not her weaknesses, and as far as possible give her all the same opportunities as other children.

Physical and mental disabilities are often interrelated, so take special care to help disabled children develop both their bodies and their minds. Involve neighbours and friends in helping where they can.

A disabled child needs to learn to be independent. Let her struggle to do things herself, even if it would be faster to just do them yourself.

Children with a mental illness often cannot control their strange behaviour. We should teach all our children to accept this, and to give disabled children love, protection and understanding.

Activities

- 1) Think of children with disabilities in your community and discuss if they are given the same opportunities as other children. Are they given special care and assistance to deal with their disabilities?
- 2) Discuss what could be done for disabled children, and make a practical plan of action.

TOPIC 13.2 Attitudes towards children who are different

Introduction

One of the most important things a mother, father or caregiver can do is to help our young children to grow up as well balanced, tolerant and non-violent individuals. Our children come into contact with people who are physically or mentally disabled, and it is important that they accept and respect them.

All children – whether disabled or not – have the same basic needs: they all need to love and be loved, to have good food and shelter, and to be treated with respect.

All children develop attitudes and feelings about themselves and others in the home environment. They are easily influenced by the attitudes and feelings of their parents or caregivers, who should try to ensure that the child develops positive attitudes and feelings about himself, and about people who are different from him.

Often a child fears what he does not understand. He then might act in a cruel way. With a little more understanding, however, he may overcome that fear, and instead of being cruel to a disabled child, become that child's friend.

As a parent or caregiver, you should act as a positive role model for the children and the whole community by encouraging positive attitudes and treating all children equally.

Activities

- 1) Discuss examples (locally, or from elsewhere) of adults having negative attitudes toward others who are different from themselves, and the consequences of this.
- 2) Think of practical ways in which you can encourage children to treat everybody equally and with respect.



TOPIC 13.3 Child abuse and neglect

Introduction

Unfortunately, child abuse is an evil that occurs all over the world. It is something that should be taken seriously – we can never ignore it. Nobody wants to falsely accuse someone of abusing or neglecting a child, but if we suspect that a child is being neglected or abused, it is our duty to establish the truth and take action, if necessary (See Topic 13.4 below).

Child abuse and neglect can occur in many different ways, as described below.



Neglect

The child is ignored at home, and is not included in family activities. She does not get enough food (this can easily happen to an orphan staying with a big family.) A child's health and well-being may be ignored, or she may not get help when she is sick. Her basic needs are not taken care of.

Emotional abuse

The child is insulted, humiliated and punished without reason, and is not shown love and care. She is mostly just told what to do, but not listened to.

Physical abuse

The child is beaten, whipped, burned or physically hurt in ways that don't count as normal punishment. A child can be disciplined through being talked to and having some things taken away from her, but she should never be physically harmed. Hair pulling, pinching, suffocating and other cruel acts are in effect physical torture.

Child labour

The child is forced to do hard physical work (not just helping with household chores) and does not have time to study or play. She is sent out to look for food or money, and is punished if she does not succeed.

Sexual abuse

The child is raped, molested, or touched in an inappropriate way. She is exposed, either physically or through pictures and stories, to sexual acts and ideas beyond her age. (It is important to remember that both boys and girls can be sexually abused.)

Warning signs

A child may be suffering abuse or neglect if she:

- is unclean, smells dirty, has bad teeth or unwashed clothing, is too thin or constantly tired, or looks dehydrated or malnourished;
- is unusually withdrawn, passive, uncommunicative, aggressive, destructive, or nervous;
- cries often, suddenly, and for no obvious reason; has frequent or unexplained injuries;
- complains of numerous beatings, or of someone “doing things”;
- goes to the bathroom with difficulty, or limps; has burns, bruises, or patches of hair missing;
- is usually afraid of other children or adults;
- seems to be drunk or drugged; or
- has sudden changes of behaviour (e.g. talkative to very quiet; shy to aggressive and rude).

A child who misbehaves is not always just a “troublemaker”. Children may behave badly as a way of calling for attention and help. Do not to ignore them – try to find out what is behind their actions.

Activities

- 1) Discuss if you agree that the examples mentioned above count as neglect and abuse.
- 2) Discuss if you have ever suspected that a child you know is being neglected or abused, and what you did or did not do about it.

TOPIC 13.4 How to deal with abuse and neglect

Introduction

If you suspect that a young child is being neglected or abused, you should go and talk to the parents or caregivers. Maybe there is something wrong. Maybe they need help to solve it. Maybe a stronger intervention is needed.

When a child is displaying signs of abuse, try talking to him to find out what is wrong. Always respect his right to privacy – don’t try to get him to tell you what is wrong in front of other people.

If you truly suspect abuse, do not hesitate to take action. You may inform the parents, the police, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, a social worker, Childline, a minister of a church, a school principal or teacher, a traditional authority, or anybody else who you think may be able to help.



If you speak to the parents or caregivers, do not begin by accusing or threatening them. This can make the situation worse for the child. Be polite, but firm, and explain that you have come to speak with them because you are concerned about their child.

Abuse of any kind should never be ignored. Children who are suffering from abuse must be given support and attention. If they are behaving in strange ways, we must try to understand their actions, and help them to heal.

There are many factors in a child's life that can cause emotional stress, however, so a troubled child is not always an abused child. Some reasons for a child being disruptive or disturbed are:

Poverty

This is a serious problem that affects many children. They may have few belongings, not enough food, and a lot of stress at home.

Loss of parents and family members

Today, people are exposed to many diseases and illnesses, including HIV/AIDS, and more and more children are orphaned. We must provide these children with care and emotional support, and also ensure that they are safe and comforted.

Activities

- 1) Discuss what you will do if you meet children who show signs of neglect or abuse.
- 2) Discuss if you have the right to go and talk to parents and caregivers about how they treat a child, or if you think this is a private matter. How do you decide that your suspicions are so strong that you really should take action?
- 3) Discuss if you should inform the authorities (police, MGE CW, a social worker) if you strongly suspect that a child is being abused or seriously neglected.
- 4) Discuss what you can do to protect children from neglect and abuse in your community.



THEME 14

COMMUNITY ACTION

AIMS

- ➔ Understanding how an organised community can improve conditions for our children

TOPIC 14.1 What the community can do to create a supportive environment for young children

Introduction

Two people working together can achieve much more than two people working on their own. If you and another caregiver get together to discuss how you can solve a problem, you will almost certainly end up with something better than what either one of you could have thought of alone.



The more parents and caregivers meet to cooperate and share ideas, the more they will be able to take the initiative and use their skills in positive ways.

When you hold a meeting, you need to be clear about what problems you want to solve, or what improvements you want to make. Then you need to discuss the many different ways you could solve the problem or make the improvement. Once you agree on the solution, you need to make a plan of action – who will do what, and by when?

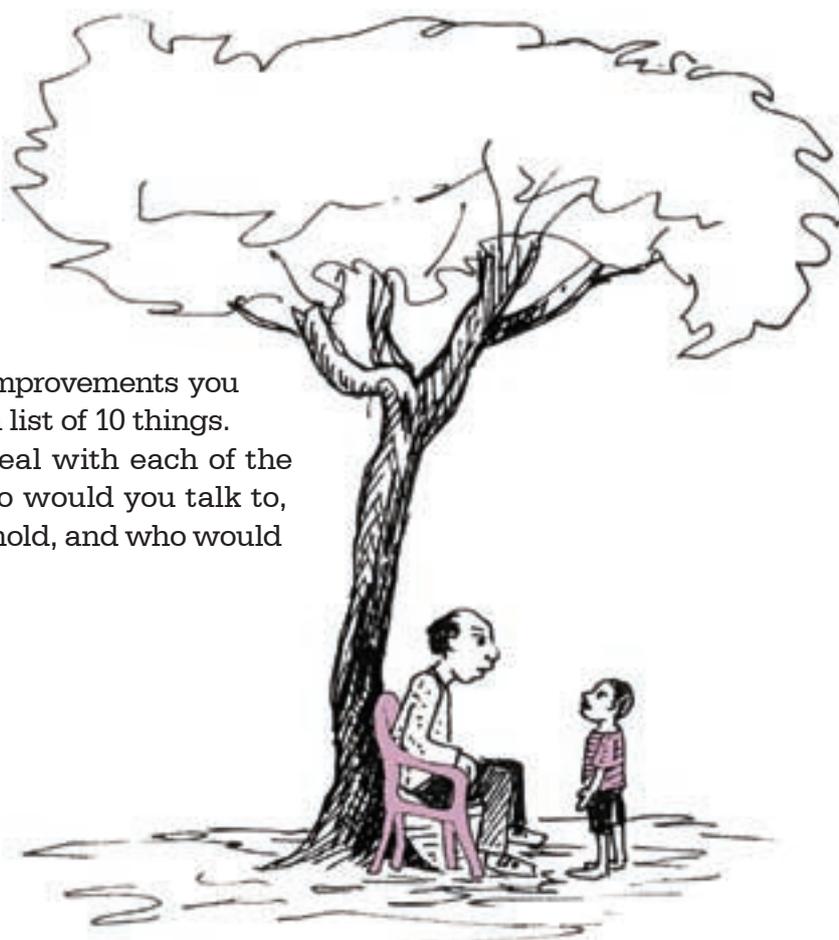
For example, a group of parents could decide to take turns to care for each other's children, so that they all get a chance to have some time without small children to look after. This would allow them to go shopping or to the clinic, or to focus on some other activity.

There are so many areas to focus on. For example, communities could plan how to take action:

- to improve water and sanitation;
- to make a variety of healthy foods available;
- to fight malaria;
- to support children in their learning;
- to help each to deal with the consequences of HIV/AIDS; and
- to fight alcohol abuse.

Activities

- 1) Think of examples that show how cooperating with others increases our overall ability to achieve things.
- 2) Discuss which problems you would like to solve in your community, or what improvements you would like to make. Make a list of 10 things.
- 3) Discuss how you would deal with each of the 10 things on your list. Who would you talk to, what meetings would you hold, and who would you invite?



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