

LET KIDS BE KIDS ACTIVITY BOOKS



**BRIEFING
NOTE**



التعليم فوق الجميع
Education Above All



Who We Are

Education Above All (EAA) Foundation is a global foundation established in 2012 by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser. EAA Foundation aims to transform lives through education. We believe that education is the single most effective means of reducing poverty, creating peaceful and just societies, unlocking the full potential of every child and youth, and creating the right conditions to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through our multi-sectoral approach, unique financing models, focus on innovation as a tool for social good, and partnerships, we aim to bring hope and real opportunities to the lives of impoverished and marginalised boys and girls.

Know More: www.educationaboveall.org

Innovation Development Programme (ID) at EAA works towards identifying persistent challenges in global education, designing, and developing innovative solutions to make learning accessible to all, particularly to the hardest to reach children and youth in underserved communities. Amid escalating conflicts, ID strives to uphold every child's right to education. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, ID launched the '[Internet Free Education Resource Bank](#)' - cost-free, open-source, low-resource-requiring project and play-based learning materials which help children learn from the world around them, despite the lack of teachers, formal schooling, and online education. The content is customized to the need, curriculum requirements and unique contexts of the learners. Some of our [award-winning emergency content](#) include:

- For Afghan refugees, ID created customized modules to meet their unique educational needs such as learning 'Survival English', Life Skills, and integrating with their host countries. These were implemented across four countries and endorsed by national and international platforms.
- For the Ukraine crisis, ID created award-winning learning resources which blend SEL, academic standards, and intercultural skills, benefitting 12,000+ host and refugee community learners in Poland. ID also produced a ground-breaking three-part Ukrainian TV series that delivers mental health and educational support at scale, reaching over 1 million viewers and counting.
- For Palestine, given the dire lack of resources and the power of play in crisis, we created a set of 40 educational and engaging games, made available in a single sheet of paper, that could be facilitated by anyone, anywhere. They do not require any resources.



Background

The compounded effects of political instability, climate shocks, economic crises, the COVID-19 pandemic, and widespread conflicts have left millions of children without consistent access to education, placing them at significant risk of long-term mental and physical harm.

The Scope of The Crisis:

- **Scale of Disruption:** About 400 million children—1 in every 5 globally—are living in or fleeing conflict zones. In Gaza and Sudan, nearly all children are out of school due to ongoing wars, while Lebanon enters its sixth year of significant education disruptions in 2024.
- **Attacks on Education:** Between 2022 and 2023, over 10,000 students and educators were killed, injured, or harmed by attacks on education. On average, eight incidents of attacks or military use of schools occurred daily during this period.
- **Long-Term Impact:** Wars inflict severe psychological and physical damage on young learners, disrupting their education and affecting their futures. More than 72 million children around the world are being driven out of education due to conflict, of which 53 percent were girls and 17 percent have functional difficulties while 21 percent have been forcibly displaced.

These children face a **generational setback**, jeopardizing their future prospects and the stability of their communities. Addressing these challenges requires immediate, tailored solutions to safeguard children's right to education, their mental and emotional well-being, and their ability to thrive in the face of adversity.

In this effort, EAA conducted a rapid, yet rigorous, needs assessment to pinpoint the specific requirements for effective solutions. **Key findings** revealed the dire need for learning materials that:

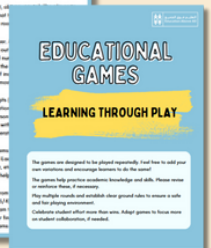
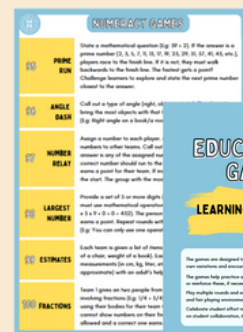
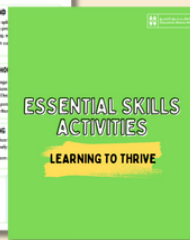
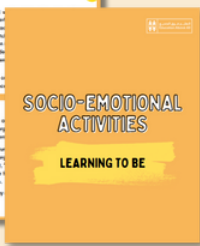
- Focus on immediate skills and competencies required for children in the midst of crisis.
- Are simple, easy to use, and require minimal resources.
- Are culturally relevant and available in Arabic, given the escalating conflicts in the region.

LET KIDS BE KIDS ACTIVITY BOOK

What Is It?

EAA developed the 'Let Kids Be Kids' Activity Books for three age groups: 5 to 7 years, 8 to 10 years, and 11 to 14 years. Developed for a usage period of 3 to 6 months, these books provide engaging activities for socio-emotional learning (SEL), crisis-preparedness, and play-based learning.

Each book consists of **100 activities** of different types:



Socio-Emotional Activities:

Activities which foster self and social awareness, empathy, and relationship-building.

Essential Skill-Building

Lessons in safety, problem-solving, and decision-making during emergencies.

Educational Games

Fun games that reinforce literacy, numeracy, science, and social science concepts.



The books also include 'Daily Routines', which are grounding exercises for children to do at the start or end of the day, to center themselves and improve focus.

Key Features

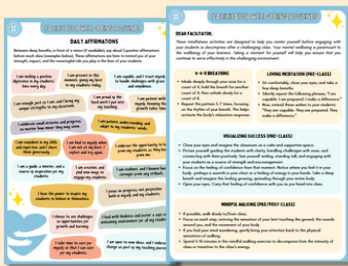
- Available in English and Arabic
- Cost-Free and Open-Source, and can be adapted further for unique needs.
- Mapped to global competency frameworks
- Successfully piloted in crisis contexts
- Can be facilitated by teachers, parents, volunteers, etc.
- Low-resource requiring and can be done with easily available items.
- Uses hands-on and play-based pedagogies
- Reviewed by education and SEL experts
- Simple, concise, and easy to implement
- Can be delivered in-person or remotely (phones, SMS, etc.)
- Comes with tools to support facilitators



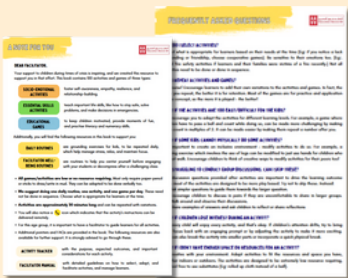
Facilitator Support

Facilitator support is integral to ensuring the effective delivery of activities, empowering them to create safe, engaging, and impactful learning experiences for children in crisis settings. The aim was to create easy-to-use tools that are simple, yet comprehensive.

The Activity Book also contains:



Well-Being Routines: Activities for facilitators to manage their stress before, during, or after engaging with children.



Overview and Frequently Asked Questions: Which introduces the package and provides important pointers to facilitate effectively.

For further support, monitoring and evaluation tools and the following resources are available:

Activity Tracker: Outlines the purpose, outcomes, and key considerations for each activity.



Facilitator Manual: Provides guidance on selecting, adapting, and implementing activities.

Why Is It Needed?

'Let Kids Be Kids' focuses on developing socio-emotional competencies and equipping learners with life-saving knowledge and skills, all anchored in play and hands-on learning. Here is why:

Play is powerful.

An undeniable amount of research highlights the transformative role of play in helping children recover from crisis-induced trauma. Play offers children a natural outlet to process emotions, reduce stress, and rebuild a sense of normalcy. Engaging in structured play fosters a sense of safety and predictability, key elements for healing in disrupted environments. Moreover, play strengthens social bonds, building peer networks that offer emotional and practical support.

Socio-Emotional Learning is critical in crisis contexts, but not easily accessible.

While academic-focused distance learning programs are ongoing, there is a dire need for socio-emotional learning (SEL) that address the profound mental and emotional challenges faced by children caught in conflict. The compounded violent crises in several countries have left children vulnerable to trauma, stress, and isolation, conditions that can significantly hinder their overall development and capacity to thrive.

Through SEL, children learn to express emotions healthily, develop empathy, and strengthen social bonds, which can create a sense of stability and support even amid crisis. Integrating SEL into educational recovery efforts is not just beneficial but necessary; it supports children's immediate well-being while also fostering a foundation of self-confidence, adaptability, and community-mindedness that will help them succeed academically and socially in the long term.

However, SEL remains largely inaccessible to parents, facilitators, and volunteers due to critical barriers: a shortage of mental health professionals, a lack of culturally appropriate and ready-to-use materials, limited teacher training in SEL, and resource constraints. Tools to protect the emotional wellbeing of the community and facilitators around the children are scarce too.

Essential survival skills must be taught to all children to navigate crises safely, but remain inconsistently integrated.

It is also crucial for children to learn essential skills that empower children with strategies to stay safe, manage emergencies, and navigate the unpredictable conditions they face. Skills, such as identifying safe shelters, understanding evacuation procedures, basic first aid, and effective communication in crises, provide children with a sense of agency and control in challenging situations. Teaching crisis preparedness also helps alleviate some of the overwhelming anxiety and helplessness that children may feel, instead fostering confidence and resilience. Children equipped with these skills are better able to protect themselves and assist others, creating a stronger foundation of safety and mutual support within communities.

Some elements of these are taught as life skills through certain subjects in many countries, but the transferability of what is taught to a crisis context is blurry - it needs to be more explicit and practical.



'Let Kids Be Kids' was developed rapidly and mindfully. Below is the development process:

How Was It Developed?

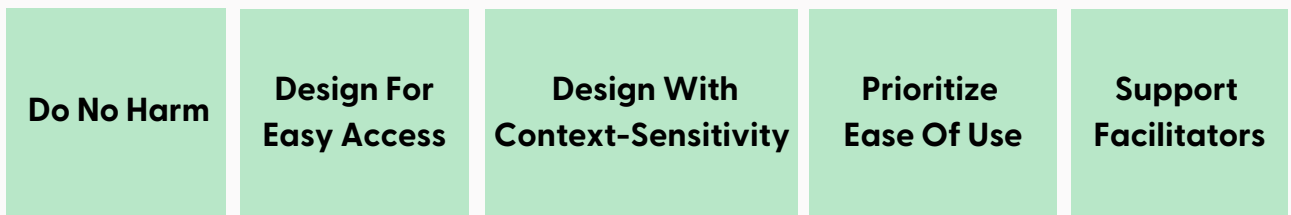
Needs Assessment

This formed the foundation of the development process.

This phase combined multiple data-gathering methods to gain a deep understanding of the needs of crisis-affected children and their communities:

- **Independent Research:** Leveraged insights from emergency education clusters and global reports to map educational gaps.
- **Engagement with Local Partners:** Conducted extensive discussions with on-the-ground NGOs, civil society organizations, and community members, including those in diaspora communities, to contextualize needs.
- **Government Stakeholder Consultations:** Engaged with relevant authorities (where possible) to align with local education priorities.
- **Collaboration with INGOs:** Worked closely with UN bodies and international NGOs to ensure alignment with global best practices in education in emergencies.

The Guiding Principles were derived from the Needs Assessments:



Ideation

A bank of activities for immediate emergencies was underscored in our needs assessments. Several SEL frameworks were reviewed to distill the core domains that would inform activity design, from Harvard University and INEE's EASEL Lab.

The CASEL Framework was used to inform the core SEL domains (Self-Management, Self-Awareness, Social-Awareness, Relationship Skills, and Responsible Decision-Making). Additionally, the following domains were incorporated into the activities:

- **Intellectual Stimulation:** In crisis settings, children often experience interruptions to their academic learning, leaving gaps in foundational skills and cognitive engagement. Activities that encourage critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity help sustain their intellectual growth, keeping their minds active and fostering curiosity.
- **Physical Stimulation:** Physical activities are crucial for children's overall well-being, especially in crisis situations where stress and confinement can impact mental and physical health. Movement-based activities help reduce anxiety, improve mood, and develop motor skills, allowing children to release pent-up energy in positive ways.
- **Crisis Preparedness:** Teaching children essential survival skills provide a sense of agency and preparedness, alleviating anxiety and reinforcing children's confidence in their ability to protect themselves and others.

Self-Awareness

Understanding one's emotions, values, and strengths

Social Awareness

Showing empathy, understanding social norms, and appreciating diversity.

Self-Management

Regulating emotions, managing stress, and setting personal goals.

Let Kids Be Kids Competencies**Relationship Skills**

Building healthy relationships, communicating effectively, and working well in teams.

Responsible Decision-Making

Making ethical, safe, and respectful choices.

Crisis-Preparedness

Building survival skills for safety and resilience in emergencies.

Intellectual Stimulation

Encouraging critical thinking and creativity to sustain cognitive growth.

Physical Stimulation

Promoting movement to reduce stress, improve mood, and develop motor skills.

Added by EAA

Content Development

Considering the urgency of the situation, EAA reviewed existing open-source materials from different organisations such as Right to Play, International Rescue Committee, UNHCR, etc. They were consolidated, mapped to ground requirements, and adapted to local contexts and needs.

EAA's education experts created several activities to address the gaps identified, along with the design of the Activity Books, pointers for the facilitators, well-being routines, etc. Each activity was mapped to one or more of the domains above.

Content Reviews

Once developed, there were multiple rounds of reviews followed by iteration of content based on feedback.

- **Two rounds of reviews by specialists in EAA:** Focused on alignment with guiding principles, relevance, adequate representation of the different domains, and age-appropriateness.
- **Two rounds of reviews by Child Psychologists SEL experts:** Evaluated the socio-emotional learning aspects, ensuring content was trauma-sensitive and suitable for children facing crisis situations. The content was thoroughly vetted to align to the guiding principle 'Do No Harm'.

Rapid Prototyping On-The-Ground

Activities were rapidly piloted by Teach For Lebanon, for crisis-affected learners in Lebanon. The content was **tested for both in-person and remote modalities**; activities were facilitated in shelters, through hotlines, and in classroom settings. Qualitative and quantitative data were documented through surveys and discussions. Facilitators from Lebanese Alternative Learning also reviewed the content.

The feedback provided by the facilitators were further incorporated to ensure practical applicability in classroom settings, clarity, and increased engagement for both facilitators and children amidst an active crisis.

Content Translation

The content was translated into Arabic by experts from Hamad Bin Khalifa University, Qatar, followed by an additional review by EAA education specialists to ensure language accuracy and appropriate contextualization.

Proof-Reading

Both the English and Arabic versions were proofread by education experts from EAA and volunteers from the crisis-affected communities to refine clarity and coherence before finalization.

Facilitator Manual

The Facilitator Manual was developed to be crisp and easy-to-understand for facilitators who may or may not have formal training. It covers guidelines on how to select, adapt and implement activities effectively. Feedback from facilitators and SEL experts at the rapid prototyping stage were systematically documented and used to create the manual.

The manual also refers educators to well-established, high-quality training resources already available, especially on how to address trauma in crisis settings. This aligns with our principle of avoiding duplication and focusing on complementing existing efforts.

The resources were uploaded to EAA's website and can be accessed here: resources.educationaboveall.org/general-emergency-response

Acknowledgements

EAA recognizes the invaluable contributions made by its content, review and implementing partners, and volunteers.

Review Partners

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Baroudi is a licensed Clinical Psychologist with a Master's in Clinical Psychology from Balamand University. She currently works with Qatar Foundation, specializing in CBT, DBT, mindfulness, and Trauma-Focused CBT. She is the Former President of the Lebanese Psychological Association and former board member of the Middle East Psychological Association. She also founded and directed Learning Support Departments in several schools in North Lebanon, where she implemented evidence-based practices, developed early intervention programs, and led inclusive education initiatives.

Ibrahim Sanjaq

Sanjaq has over 24 years of experience in counseling, mental health, child protection, social work, and pastoral care. He has worked with 14 organizations and educational institutions across Jordan, Palestine, Canada, the UAE, and Qatar. He has served as the Program Director for Counseling and Community Mental Health with the United Nations in Palestine. He was also responsible for school counselors, psychologists, and Settlement counselors in Canada, and worked as a child protection officer in the United Arab Emirates. Currently, he is part of the Safeguarding & Well-being Team at Qatar Foundation.

Implementing Partners



Translation Partner

