

## **SLUM AID PROJECT'S EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (AGE: 0-6 years)**



Slum Aid Project is a child focused organization. Many people believe that the most vulnerable children live in the rural areas. SAP, however, has a different story, because children living in the slum areas suffer grave problems which seem to be neglected by many development agencies and government when considering poverty related programs. The barriers range from social, cultural, physical, economic to geographical.

### **Definition of Early Childhood Development**

ECD is a process through which the young children grow and thrive physically, mentally, socially, emotionally and morally. It begins from conception and extends up to 8 years of age. This involves set of actions and behaviours that support a child's development in a holistic manner including: feeding, providing clothing, shelter and supervision; preventing and attending to illness; engaging the child in interaction; providing stimulation and safe environment for play and exploration; providing love; affection and security; and enabling the development of self esteem and self confidence.

### **Slum Aid's Approach to ECD in the slum areas.**

Since inception in 1991, SAP has combined direct services to children and other slum dwellers; legal research and analysis, public outreach, and policy advocacy with government and the international community to improve the lives of women living in the slums. Our goal is to give children and other slum dwellers a dignified life through raising the standards by which they are treated in Uganda and beyond.

### **SAP's Approach to ECD**

Slum aid project's approach provides programs to improve on the development of children from the 0 age. These programs include:

1. Capacity building programs to all stakeholders.
2. Parenting education and sensitization programs on ECD for their children.
3. Behavioral change communications to parents.
4. Training Nursery teachers in the use of ECD services.
5. Training parents and other community members in accessing available ECD services.

### **Early Childhood development for urban children.**

Early childhood development is as important as taking care of the sick or the needy people in our societies. ECD for children living in the slum areas is particularly important because of the so many social and environment problems faced by slum dwellers.

Normal childhood development and growth is affected by such factors as genetics, nutrition, and multiple familial and social factors. In large urban settings, children are constantly exposed to varying behaviors, attitudes and environmental related problems both inside and outside the home. These tend to influence the early development of children in the slum areas. These are suspected to be associated with developmental alterations for children growing up in the urban slum settings.

Change must be made in the manner which incorporates all stakeholders in the urban slums. The se stakeholders include; Parents, Community, Community service deliverers, and leaders including government. There is a need to plan on roles of engagement in helping the children grow up as responsible citizens. Despite the efforts by parents and the community various grave gaps still persist. Questions still arise as to why many urban slum children are taking alternative paths to good living. Many children turn to drugs, prostitution, robbery, forgery etc.

In large urban settings, children are also exposed to varying amounts of assorted toxic chemicals There is a need to plan for researches to cover all these aspects if ECD must be improved in the urban slums. Cross-disciplinary approaches, using both social scientists and physicians and incorporating community knowledge, are required for the evaluation of children in urban settings, with each discipline contributing to theory and methodology.

## Stakeholders in ECD

- Teachers/Caregivers
- Parents/Guardians
- Ministry of Education and Sports
- Ministry of Local Government
- Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development
- Ministry of Water, Lands and Environment
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries
- Ministry of Internal Affairs.
- Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.
- National Curriculum Development Center.
- Uganda National Examinations Board.
- Education Standards Agency.
- Kyambogo University and any other Universities for Tertiary Institutions involved in ECD.
- Non government.Organizations(NGOs),Community Based Organizations(CBOs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)
- Proprietors/Foundation Bodies, cultural leaders, Religious leaders/Cultural leaders
- Political leaders (MPs, LCV, LCIII, LCII, LCI, Councilors)
- Local government (District/Sub-county)
- Directors/Head teachers of ECD centers

## **PARENTING:**

### *(CRUCIAL ROLE FOR CHILDREN'S GROWTH FROM AGE 0)*

Parents have a great role to play in the early education of their children. Find out how you can do this right from early childhood to adulthood.

## **Your child explores their world.**

As your young child grows, their brain is constantly developing. The first three years of life are very important for brain development as the brain changes quickly during this time. By the age of three, your child's brain will be about 80% of its adult size, compared with their body, which is about 50% of adult size.

***AS your child grows, you have a crucial role to make sure your child gets support for their brain to keep developing well.*** To do this;

- Keep providing a safe, secure and loving environment for your baby as they develop into a toddler.
- Respond to your child's needs. Your care needs to be linked closely to their needs and interests as they grow and change. This can bring many new challenges.
- Let your young child explore as much as possible within reason.

## **Baby Growth**

This section deals with several aspects of baby growth

### **Changes as your baby grows**

As your baby grows and changes, your relationship continues to build.

- Changes can happen very quickly at this stage.
- Building your relationship with your baby, so that they can learn and grow, is a constant job.
- You will be learning more about your baby's emotions, and they will be learning about the world from your emotional responses.
- Repetition is important for learning. You will be strengthening the pathways in their brain that form the basis of all their further learning.

Your baby will learn a lot through exploring. They need to know that you are there while they explore. A curious baby is a good sign – it shows that they feel attached to you, and yet they are gaining the security and confidence to explore their environment and other people.

## **Getting mobile**

- As they become more mobile, your baby will be getting into everything. They may still put everything in their mouth as a way of finding out more about the things around them.
- Check out their world by getting down to their eye level. When down on the floor, you will find lots of things that interest them.
- They will also be learning about cause and effect. For example, they will probably try the : "what happens when I drop this off the high-chair?" game. They might want to find out where the food goes, what happens to their drink, who picks up what has been dropped, and how long they can keep the game going.
- They are also learning about the consequences of their actions and also what you like and don't like.

### **Focus on their environment**

- Make sure your young child can explore their world safely. The need for safety applies both in your home and out and about with your young child.
- The best environment for a baby to learn and develop in is a 'yes' environment – where you know they are safe so you don't have to say 'no' all the time.
- Keep providing a safe, secure and loving environment for your baby as they develop into a toddler.
- Respond to your child's needs. Your care needs to be linked closely to their needs and interests as they grow and change. This can bring many new challenges.
- Let your young child explore as much as possible within reason.

### **The exploring/learning process**

- How should I react to my child's exploring?
- Balancing exploration and safety
- Exploring and learning can be stressful

### **The exploring/learning process**

Exploring their world is a vital part of growing and learning for your child. Young children seem to want to do things that make you say "no". They are seeking and constantly testing the

boundaries. For example, they may start eating the cat's food. Your child has seen their own food in a bowl, and made the connections:

- "I've got a bowl..."
- "I get yummy food in my bowl..."
- "Is the cat's food yummy, too?"

This is actually a very important process. It is the start of your child making sense of their world, and going through the first steps in a process of scientific enquiry. Your child is starting to test out their actions in the wider world. This follows earlier stages of 'cause and effect' enquiry such as "what happens when I drop my bowl off the table?"

### **Balancing exploration and safety**

It is an essential part of your child's development to explore and find out what happens when they take a particular action. Your role is to allow them to explore but also keep them safe - as well as protecting other children and precious objects.

To make sure that your child is learning safely, and continuing to explore their world without you saying no all the time:

- Ensure that the environment is as safe for exploring as possible.
- Pay close attention to your child so you can intervene, distract and re-focus their attention before they get frustrated.
- Talk calmly with them to explain the reasons.
- Help them to learn the rules so that they can explore and be safe.

### **How should I react to my child's exploring?**

How you deal with your child's exploring is really important for your child.

- Allowing them to explore freely is important but increases the chance that your child will want to do things that you don't want them to do.
- While exploring and going through learning processes, your child also needs to learn rules that will keep them safe, such as not to eat the cat food.
- To keep them safe, your initial reaction may be to say 'no', get angry, or take the cat food away.

- Explain carefully and calmly why they can or can't do something, so they can understand the reasons.
- You may have to do lots of repetition here, so that they learn the 'rules'.

### **Exploring and learning can be stressful**

Your response may create a negative feeling or stress in your child. They know something is wrong. Your child needs to understand and learn why you have reacted that way. Talk calmly to your child.

Remember that:

- Your child will be learning something new by being stressed. The stress has a physical or chemical effect on their brain.
- It is important that they don't stay stressed for long.
- They will also be learning how to calm themselves down.

You are helping them to gain the skills they need for learning. Practice makes perfect and your patience and support are critical.

### **Behaviour**

- Helping your child to learn good behaviour and knowing how to deal with challenging behaviour are important.
- Helping your child to learn good behaviour is an important part of your role as a parent and vital to your child's learning and development.
- Knowing how to deal with your child's challenging behaviour is also important.
- Attention seeking, It is important to understand the reasons why your child engages in attention seeking behaviour.
- You need to be consistent and not respond to this type of behaviour, but talk to your child about how their behaviour makes you feel.
- We also have tips about how you can encourage positive behaviour in your toddler or young child.

Toys can encourage play and support your young child's learning. Playing is important for your child because it is fun and one of the best ways to learn.

### **How does play help your child?**

Toddlers are figuring out that they can make some decisions for themselves. Playing means they can make lots of decisions and find out what happens. They can also:

- Strengthen their language skills and solve problems
- Express their feelings and learn to play with and alongside others
- Use their imagination and be creative
- Build muscle strength
- Use their senses to explore their world. (Repeating interesting experiences over and over again helps to develop your toddler's brain.)

### **What is your role?**

Your role is to be your child's "play supporter". Try to follow your child's lead. Let them be in charge of the play and choose what they want to do – your role is to give support, ideas and encouragement when they want or need it.

Think about safety:

- Check that any play items won't choke your child, there are no sharp edges and nothing is poisonous.
- Be safe around water – when your child is playing with water, always stay with them.

Remember that the process rather than the product of play is important for children aged from 1–2 years. Let them do things their way if it won't harm them or the household.

Also remember that toddlers have plenty of energy and like to be active. Don't be upset if they only try an activity for a short time – even if you've made an effort to set it up – they'll often come back to it later.

### **Playing (Playing is learning)**

Playing is the most important way children learn. Playing promotes creativity, develops the imagination, helps build relationships and challenges a child to take risks. It extends their

language, develops physical coordination, helps understanding of patterns and matching, and develops their concentration. Playing also helps children build an interest in how things work, and develops enquiring minds.

Young children love to play – it's fun and they enjoy it. Playing has other benefits too. By playing, children learn about themselves and their world. Playing is their 'job'. You can help your baby, toddler or young child learn and develop by ensuring that they have plenty of opportunities to play and explore in an environment that is stimulating, safe and secure.

Four tools all parents must have for a rich play environment are:

- Time
- Attention
- Patience
- A sense of fun!

### **Time**

Make some time in your day to play. Children don't need to be stimulated every minute of the day but like adults, they enjoy both active and exciting games, and quiet activities too. Match your level of energy with your child's.

### **Paying attention**

Your child will let you know when they want more of a game, when they have had enough, and when they are ready for a different game or activity that interests them. Active and exciting games are best played when your child is wide awake and full of energy, and quiet activities or songs when they are tired or grumpy.

### **Be very patient**

Being patient can be the hardest part of playing with your child, but it's really important. Be ready to do their favorite activity over and over again. Repeating things is how a child learns and helps their brain to develop.

### **Make it fun**

Lots of variety helps your baby and older child. Just like us, babies and young children get bored. Introduce new opportunities for play and exploration when you can. Toys should be safe and interesting and provide a variety of sounds, shapes, textures and colours.

## Music with young children

Music can be an important part of your child's learning right from the start. It helps in many areas of learning and development, including language and listening, emotions, and movement. Even before your baby is born, sing to them, and play music – they can hear from inside your body. Early experience of music will help your child learn to love and appreciate music.

### **How does music help with learning?**

Music has always been one of the important ways we communicate with each other and is part of the way your child learns to understand their world. Music stimulates your child's brain, with a combination of sound, rhythm and rhyme.

Music and singing involve lots of repetition, and repetition is the key to learning because it helps strengthen the connections in your child's brain. Your child can pick up tunes and words really easily because of the rhythms, rhymes or patterns and repetition in music and songs. Music helps your child to learn about rhythm and pattern – and this is similar to the learning involved in maths.

### **How else can music help my child?**

Music affects how we feel. For centuries, all over the world, people have used and still use lullabies to calm and soothe babies, and to get them to sleep. Lively music with a faster beat can stimulate your child to get up and be active. So pick appropriate songs for the time of day and mood of your child.

Music can reduce your own and your child's stress

- Sing out loud – it makes you take in deep breaths and reduces stress
- Listen to or play soothing music with your child
- Dance to music with your child
- Make up your own funny words to encourage your child's sense of humour
- Share songs and tunes with your child from your family history. It is really wonderful for your child to hear songs in your first language

### **How can I use singing for learning with my child?**

- Listen to a wide variety of different music – but not too loud, look after your child's hearing
- Make and play with simple musical instruments – pot drums, jingle bells, simple shakers
- Play soothing background music playing while doing everyday activities
- Dance with your baby on you hip, your toddler on your feet
- Make up your own words and tunes for songs with your child. Make up a little phrase or a loving name for your baby and sing it to a simple tune

### **What if I can't sing?**

Sometimes you might feel self-conscious about your singing, but your young child won't judge the quality of your voice. They love hearing you, feeling the sounds you are making, the changes in volume and pitch, and rhythm. Singing is an activity that you can enjoy sharing with your child any time, anywhere.

### **Art and your child**

Art is important for your child because it lets them express themselves and learn at the same time. Being creative and doing art allows them to explore their world. In this process they are also learning to manage their feelings. Creative work and art help them to see and understand the world.

### **Setting up an art space**

To prepare things at home for your child to be creative, put aside time for art, and set up a space.

- provide a creative environment and let your child be in charge of what they do
- Set up a space so your child can enjoy doing art, and you don't need to worry about crayons on the wallpaper, paint on the carpet, or glue on the floor.
- Tape some newspaper on the floor or on a big table. Then tape the piece of paper that is going to be drawn on in the middle of your larger paper – and remind them to draw on the paper.

Use all sorts of materials for drawing and other art activities, such as:

- Sticks in the sand and in muddy earth.

- Chalk on the footpath.
- Painting on things outside with water and a paintbrush – things look really interesting when they are wet and you don't have the worry of using real paint.

### **Movements and tools for art**

Your child will start off using large movements for their art work – moving their whole arm, and as their brain develops, the movements get more specific and eventually they are able to draw with very small movements of their hands and fingers.

Your child will develop from using just their big muscles to also using their small muscles over time and with practice. The nerve connections from the brain to the hand are crucial in this process. The myelin coating on these nerves builds up gradually over time and with positive experiences so that the connections get better and stronger.

Remember that:

- the younger your child is, the larger the drawing tools they need. For example, young children will enjoy using felt pens, big crayons and chalk
- as your child gets older they gain more control over the smaller muscles for drawing and they will enjoy using a variety of tools for drawing.

your child needs lots of practice and repetition of the large and small movements needed for drawing.

### **Young children and television**

Television can have a strong influence on your child's learning and development. You can help make TV watching a positive learning experience for your child.

#### **How much TV is OK for young children?**

Some researchers say that about an hour a day of television viewing is enough for toddlers and young children. Three hours or more of TV a day for your young child is too much because:

- They are not being physically active
- Interactions with others are reduced, and this has an impact on their learning
- Sometimes it can strain their eyes

However, a certain amount of TV may be beneficial for your child, as long as you help make it a shared and positive experience.

How do I make TV watching a positive learning experience?

You are your child's main role model for learning good habits and have an important part to play in your child's learning while they are watching TV. Help your child develop healthy TV habits by watching with your child.

Talk about what is happening

- Move, sing and dance
- Laugh together
- Ask and answer questions to help them learn more about their world

TV viewing can also be a good quiet time for your child - maybe a time for their favorite video or program. If you have a video recorder, make a series of your child's favorite programs for them to watch when they need a rest.

Choose programs and videos that are designed for your child's age. Programs with music, animals or dancing can help your child to learn.

Young children are fantastic imitators and learn at tremendous speed. Your child may learn and repeat things that they have only seen once or twice on TV. They can memorize songs, jingles, words and actions. Choose programs that are:

- Short
- Move slowly
- Aimed at your child's interests

### **What should I be aware of when my child is watching TV?**

- Toddlers and young children learn by doing things and they think everything they see on TV is real. TV may upset or confuse your young child. Think about what your child is watching because they take everything in
- Establish healthy TV viewing habits with your child from an early age. TV routines set up at an early age will often persist through childhood
- Some research has shown that watching violence on TV has negative effects on children's behaviour. Make sure you know what your child is watching and turn the TV off if the program is violent.

- It can be tempting to use TV to keep your child entertained – especially during the holidays, but try to watch with them if possible and limit their TV time.
- Try not to have TV on in the background when no-one is watching it. It is distracting and makes it harder for your child to concentrate and be active

Exploration and creativity Find out how your child learns to express their thinking and feelings and develop a sense of self-worth through exploring and creating. Exploration, creativity and imagination are important for learning because they allow your child to express their thinking and feelings and develop a sense of self-worth. Very young children build up a sense of themselves using their imagination through play.

## **Talking with your child**

Talking to your child is a very important part of helping them learn. Conversing with your child starts early, when you talk and respond to your small baby as they coo and babble. Everything that you say to your baby helps their brain make the links needed to understand and communicate as they grow.

### **Talking to young children**

#### **Babies**

Talk to your baby in high tones, use short words, and accentuated sounds and emphasized facial expressions. This is the kind of talking that a baby's ears tune into most easily and makes it easier for your baby to see and hear you.

#### **Toddlers and young children**

As your child begins to use single words, your conversations with them will grow in leaps and bounds. These two-way conversations help your child's language and thinking ability. The more talking you do together and with your family, the more words your child will hear and learn, and that helps their thinking.

Listening is important too. You are the role model for both listening and talking. Find time to listen and talk with your child. Time and patience as well as keeping your speaking speed slow will make a big difference when children are learning to talk.

### **Tips on talking to young children**

- Use your voice to emphasize repeated words or sounds.
- When your baby makes a sound, make the same sound back – this is a way of saying “I heard you. I can make the same sound too!”
- Give your baby, toddler or young child enough time to respond.
- Get down to your child’s level and join in with what they are doing.
- Try to talk about what your child is interested in and what they are doing now and playing with – this is much easier for them to understand than talking about things they can’t see or touch.
- Tell and show your child that you enjoy talking with them.
- You are helping them learn how to get on with other people, and they need lots of opportunities to practice with you first.
- Give them time to respond to you. This is the beginning of learning about taking turns.

### **What language should I speak?**

If your family speaks more than one language, your child can learn those languages right from the start. Your baby needs to hear good examples of the languages and both simple and more complicated speech to help them imitate sounds, learn words and their meanings. This helps the language parts of their brain to develop and helps them to become a fluent speaker.

### **What about body language?**

Your child will communicate with you long before they start talking. Body language is important - your very new baby will scan your face for facial movements and practice getting their eyes and brain working together to process what they see. Your facial expressions, noises and tone of your voice, along with gestures, all help your baby start learning all aspects of communication.

### **Questions are good**

Questions are useful to keep the conversation going, but too many at once can be like an interrogation.

- Make sure each question makes sense and you really listen to the answer.

- Try not to ask too many questions at once.
- Try not to ask a question that sounds like it has a 'right' answer, as if you are giving your child a test.

If you find yourself asking questions like: “What’s that?” or “What colour is that?” then try changing the sentence around and saying something like “I can see a big blue ball. Can you roll it to me?” Then you can comment on what happens next – “Good, you rolled it right to me - your turn to catch it. Here it comes.” Keep the conversation and the activity going for as long as it is fun for both of you, and let your child participate.

## Reading and Learning

### Getting ready to read

You can help your child get ready to read from birth onwards by stimulating their imagination, giving them an understanding of relationships, an interest in the world around them and encouraging their curiosity.

All these qualities can be developed through play, which gives them the basic tools they need to learn to read and write. But as well as lots of opportunities for play, children need more direct ‘pre-reading’ experience, and this is where you can help them.

You can make them aware of what the written word can convey by doing lots of everyday things which are connected with language, stories, reading and writing. This will help them when they reach school and formally learn to read and write.

All of the following activities will help your child learn that information is conveyed by the written word:

- Sending an email
- Referring to instructions
- Writing and getting letters
- Flicking through magazines
- Looking at bus timetables
- Choosing from catalogues
- Finding a telephone number
- Using a recipe

- Sending a birthday card
- Shopping trips:
- Writing the shopping list
- Looking for bargains in the paper
- Collecting coupons
- Looking for items on the shelves
- Reading the labels
- Checking the list to make sure you've got everything
- Paying

Driving the car:

- Using a map
- Reading traffic signs
- Reading street signs
- Looking house numbers.
- Spotting the familiar signs

Toddler development

As toddlers grow and learn they begin to push the boundaries, in growth and behavior. This can provide challenges for parents as their children become more active and adventurous. Use this section to help support your toddler as they grow, learn and develop.

### **Good communication is the key**

Your children want to make you happy and they find it easier if they know what you want them to do. You can make a big difference to your child's behaviour by the way you communicate, such as:

- saying clearly what you want your child to do
- giving lots of positive feedback and praise – telling your child that they are doing something well helps them to develop self-confidence and when children feel confident and good about themselves, they are able to learn new things.

### **Learning by doing**

Young children do much of their learning through experience and practice. They spend time trying to make sense of the world around them and that means a lot of exploring and experimenting. It may seem like they are being naughty and simply trying to ‘push your button’ when, in reality, they are just doing the things that help them to learn and develop, such as repeatedly dropping things from their high chair to see who will pick it up.

As your child becomes more independent and increasingly pushes the boundaries it is important to ensure that they feel secure and know what the limits are and that their environment is safe. Once you have made the environment safe – get down to their eye level to see what they will be interested in that is within range – you can then help them to learn about the boundaries you have established.

Your child will feel secure if you are consistent and fair with rules and expectations around their behavior. Consistency helps children to learn. Try to have the same rules every day.

### **Time, practice, love and patience**

Telling and showing your child what you want them to do will help them to manage their own behavior – it takes time, practice, love and patience. Your child will not always understand what you expect the first time. You might need to explain again, show them, and work alongside them. For example with tidying up – you will be able to reduce your help over time until they are doing most of the tidying themselves.

You can also help your child by talking about the consequences of what they do. For example, “If you run inside you might bang into something and hurt yourself” or “If you pull the cat’s tail the cat will scratch you.”

When teaching your child about managing their behavior, don’t hold back your love when they don’t do what you want – this can hurt your child. Make sure they understand that you love them and it is their behavior you don’t like.

### *For Example*

*Smacking and hitting are not effective ways to help your child learn to behave well or get along with others. When children get hit, they learn that hitting other people is okay. What they don't learn is how to manage their own behavior.*

Shouting and yelling can also be very frightening for your child. Instead, it is better to use laughter or a quiet voice to help calm everyone down. It gives you time to explain why, for example, drawing all over your brand new wallpaper is not a good idea! Sometimes you will need to take several deep breaths before you do or say anything.

## LEARNING TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS.

You can give your baby the best start in life simply by being a loving parent. When your baby's needs are met, they learn to trust you and the wider world. By loving them, you are helping them learn to build good relationships with you and other people too.

Attachment is about the key relationship that develops between you and your baby in the first two years of their life. Attachment is important for everyone who has a key role in their life, particularly parents and caregivers. Creating attachment also helps your baby's brain to develop. Emotional connections and attachment can start even before birth with the physical link between mother and baby. You may be thinking about:

- What your child will be like
- Possible names – will their name connect them to the wider family, or be a new name just for them?
- How you will manage
- How your baby will fit in with the family and the wider world.

Attachment is important?

How does attachment happen?

How can I build an attachment with my baby?

Sometimes it's hard

### **Attachment is important**

Once your baby is born; creating attachment and a secure relationship with you sets a pattern for future relationships.

- From the beginning, your baby is learning to trust you and the world. Trust builds as they learn that their most important adults love them.
- They learn that their needs can be met and that the world is a safe place for them to explore. They will also be more able to cope with stressful experiences in a positive way.

- First relationships help to build the child's sense of who they are and what they can expect in relationships with other people.
- As trust grows, attachment helps your baby's brain to develop.

### **How does attachment happen?**

The most important thing for a baby is their attachment with the key people who care for them. All the loving attention that you give your baby helps to make and strengthen the millions of connections in your baby's brain.

Right from the start, your baby is ready to learn and you are learning about your baby. Your relationship builds with lots of time and practice. Take time to hold your baby, gaze at them, talk and sing to them, listen to them and cuddle them.

- Your baby learns through all their senses – touch, seeing, hearing, tasting and smell. All the sensory input helps create connections in the brain. Repeating experiences over and over again strengthens these connections.
- Giving time and attention to your baby helps you get in tune with your baby. With time, your baby learns that they are loved and can trust you, and you learn to understand and make sense of their needs by reading their cues and signals.

### **How can I build an attachment with my baby?**

- Respond to your baby when they need to be held or when they need food.
- Be gentle as you care for your baby and talk about what you are doing whether it is feeding, changing, bathing or putting them to bed.
- Spend time with your baby. Make eye contact when you read, talk, sing and play with them.
- Be loving – hug and hold your baby. Give them time to respond to you with a look, a sound or reaching out or snuggling in.
- Try to 'tune in' to your baby – think about what they are letting you know about their needs. At times, they may need to be held, or for you to talk to them, or something different to look at, or maybe a quiet time.
- Enjoy doing things together – something you can both see or touch, a book you are reading, or a game you are playing – like peek-a-boo.

- Sometimes it's hard.

All parents have times when they can be worried or tense. Caring for a baby is a big job. Your close relationship with your baby means that when you are stressed, your baby may feel stressed too. It is important to have someone you trust to talk to at these times. New parents groups and playgroups can also be good places to share the joys and frustrations of the early weeks

### **Learning right from the beginning**

Research tells us that rich and meaningful experiences are very important for your child's learning and development. As a parent or caregiver, you are an important source of new information and experiences for your child.

Your child's learning process begins from even before they are born. In the beginning, You are the main source of new information and experiences for your baby.

### **Experiences develop your child's brain**

The development of your child's brain is influenced by the variety and quality of experiences they have in their early years. Every experience helps to create new or strengthen existing connections in your child's brain. Their brain actually grows in size when exposed to the stimulation of positive learning experiences.

You can support your child's learning and development by providing opportunities for play and exploration in an environment that is stimulating, safe and secure. Experiences such as talking, singing and reading provide your child with opportunities to listen, imitate and express themselves

### **Repeated experiences are good for your child.**

Our child likes, enjoys and learns from repeated experiences. For example, they enjoy hearing you sing a song over and over again and learn from reading the same story over and over again. Think about ways to extend experiences for your child. Your child's experiences will be unique according to their interests, the interests of people around them and the encouragement and support they receive.

### **Helping them learn and develop**

Infant (0-1 years)

Help your baby by:

- Spending time responding to their movements and sounds.
- Providing different objects and materials for them to explore using all their senses.
- Being playful together.
- Noticing and responding to their preferences.
- Taking time to talk.

Toddler (1-3 years) Help your toddler by:

- Talking about and describing the things they see and hear in the world around them.
- Offering them props such as toy telephones and hats so they can imitate and pretend.
- Repeating favorite songs, stories and rhymes.

Young child (3-5 years)

Help your young child by:

- Encouraging them to experiment and try things for themselves.
- Talking about what is happening as they are doing things.
- Finding out answers to questions together.
- Reminding them of things that have happened before.
- Giving them ideas that help them in their imaginary play – what would it be like to be small like a mouse?
- Repeating favorite songs, stories and rhymes.

## **Building trust to support learning**

Your baby's early experiences of being loved are important for how they connect and relate to other people and how they develop trust. Positive early relationships also have a big impact on other areas of development – your child will become more curious and be confident about interacting with others and exploring their world.

## **What is attachment?**

Attachment or bonding describes the special relationship that develops between you and your baby during their first two years.

Children who are securely attached to will be:

- more curious
- more independent
- better at dealing with frustration and conflict
- better at controlling their own anger
- better at getting on with other people
- more confident and cooperative.

## **How can I help build attachment and trust?**

When you give your child lots of attention and time, they will develop a sense of trust with you.

You have different roles at different stages:

### **0–4 months**

Provide a loving, responsive environment for your baby and meet your baby's needs for food, love, physical comfort, safety and stimulation. Learn about the ways your baby communicates with you – their facial expressions, body language and different kinds of cries.

### **4–5 months**

Introduce them to all sorts of shared experiences. Your baby can see well enough to enjoy looking at simple books, and exploring the world in your arms as you love, talk and sing to them. They will pick up on your interests as you share experiences.

### **About 6–8 months**

When your baby can sit up without support, give them safe and interesting objects to enjoy and explore.

### **9 months +**

Create a safe and interesting 'yes' environment for your baby as they become more mobile and start to explore their world. Give your child more direction about the things that are and aren't OK.

### **Attachment and brain development**

Repeating experiences over and over again with your baby strengthens the connections between the cells (or neurons) that form the pathways in their brain. This is the basis for how they learn, think and feel.

Your baby's brain needs stimulation from relationships and the environment to help form these connections. Your baby can be stimulated and learn from everyday ordinary experiences and quiet close times with you.

### **Attachment and behavior**

There will be lots of times when you need to support your child to learn how to behave well. It's important to be firm, fair and consistent.

Sometimes your child will do things you don't want or they may have a tantrum. To repair your relationship and support healthy attachment:

- Sooth, calm and settle your child as soon as possible
- Quickly get over any issue yourself – you'll reduce the flood of stress hormones that your child experiences.

While these experiences can be tough, it's good to know that these small 'ruptures' followed by repairs help your child deal with stress in the future.

*SLUM AID PROJECT WORKING TOWARDS IMPROVING CHILDREN'S GROWTH FROM **ZERO** AGE.*