

Ways to Build a More Pleasant Learning Environment



Guide to High Impact Activities with Low Costs

Mada Association – May 2013



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Table of Contents



Purpose of the Guide	6
Context and Incentive	6
Advantages of Extracurricular Activities	7
Positive Impact on the Child	7
Positive Impact on School Staff	7
Positive Impact on Parents	8
The Project: “Let’s All Go to School Initiative”	8
Phases of the Project	8
Project Results and Positive Impact	9
Challenges Faced by Schools and Solutions Found	9
Concluding Remarks	10
Participants’ Opinions	12
Guide to Extracurricular Activities	15
Psycho - Social Activities	16
Recreational and Child Rights Activities	19
Intellectual Activities	21
Sports Activities	23
Environmental Activities	26
Artistic Activities	27
Reference Material on Different Types of Activities	29
Endnotes	30



Purpose of the Guide

This guide is designed based on the good practises collected within the project “Let’s All Go to School Initiative”. It has been prepared as a reference tool to help in developing the child’s personality and boosting up the educational and pedagogical process, especially in deprived environments lacking the most basic recreational and cultural means, which are considered to be the right of every child to have access to¹. After successful completion of the project, this guide was published, summarizing the different phases of the project, the approach used, the educational experiences, as well as the results achieved and the challenges faced. The guide aims at highlighting in particular, the positive impact extracurricular activities had on the entire school environment and especially on children, bringing them pleasure and happiness, while raising their academic performance.

Through this guide, UNICEF and Mada Association seeks to share and disseminate this experience so as to become a viable model that can be further developed and used by school administrations, associations and any active individual in social work, striving to ensure the best for the child on all levels. The guide is intended to provide all those, who wish to work on human development and the consolidation of child rights, with examples of low-cost activities that can be easily applied, suiting different age groups. The guide offers in addition practical solutions to overcome possible obstacles and presents the reader with an overview of guides and reference material² on different types of activities, produced by organizations and associations for the same purpose.

Context and Incentive

Extracurricular activities contain a wide range of activities, practiced in the presence of a facilitator, according to children’s interests and desires and suitable to students’ ages. These activities improve a children’s psychological mood and help them to release their energy and gain vitality, which increases their ability to better focus in the classroom and assimilate the lessons. These activities also help in creating a closer relationship between students and their teachers and have demonstrated their positive effect on children’s educational attainment.

With the overall aim to support the educational sector and establish a child friendly learning environment, Mada Association, funded by UNICEF, implemented in the year 2012 – 2013 the project: “Let’s All Go to School Initiative”, in 12 public schools in Akkar and Hermel.³ These two regions are considered among the most deprived in the country,⁴ with the highest recorded illiteracy rates on the national level.⁵ Schools in these regions face numerous problems at many levels: To start with, the majority of school buildings are in poor condition and suffer from humidity and water infiltration, with classrooms often being dark and uninviting. Schools also suffer from substandard basic infrastructure, from rundown sanitary facilities with water leakage to poor access to electricity and heating facilities.

Most schools have no sport playground, recreational hall or library to read. They also lack laboratory equipment, audio-visual communication tools, sports equipment, etc... On the other hand, many schools have a shortage in specialized teachers in several fields, such as sport and art, explaining the absence of such classes in the majority of schools in Akkar and Hermel. In addition, the majority of the educational personnel are on contractual basis. As for the relationship between parents, teachers and students, it is often characterized by distance rather than cohesion and collaboration. This reality puts schools in a difficult situation and hinders them from implementing the minimal threshold of extracurricular activities, especially when the school funds, in most cases, hardly meet the needs to cover basic supplies, such as fuel for heating. It is therefore not surprising to find that the school dropout rates in these regions are the highest in the country.⁶

Advantages of Extracurricular Activities

It is in difficult conditions like the ones detected in public schools located in deprived areas, that extracurricular activities are the most needed. These activities could be a vital tool for accomplishing the educational objectives, given their positive impact on all parties involved in the educational process: children – parents – teachers.

Positive Impact on Children

- ▶ Aiding the emergence and development of children's talents and raising their self-esteem.
- ▶ Developing children's social skills and their capacity to cooperate.
- ▶ Enhancing group spirit among children and promoting the concept of play.
- ▶ Satisfying children's psychological and social needs, helping them better manage problems like anxiety, tension, introversion, and shyness among others.
- ▶ Enriching a child's personality and renouncing the spirit of egocentrism and selfishness, while allowing a child to acquire moral and social values through practice and application.
- ▶ Increasing children's desire to go to school on a daily basis, leading to higher attendance and an improvement in educational achievement.
- ▶ Improving the child-teacher relationship and transforming it from one of fear and anxiety into one of respect and affection.
- ▶ Transforming the school into a safe haven for children and offering a physical and psychological escape from the difficult environment they are surrounded by on a daily basis.
- ▶ Improving children's ability to communicate and express their opinions and desires confidently in front of teachers and peers.

Positive Impact on School Staff

- ▶ Giving teachers the opportunity to learn more about many aspects of a child's personality, making it easier for them to deal with students.
- ▶ Making the working environment more flexible, allowing teachers to expend less effort managing the classroom.
- ▶ Consolidating the relationship between teachers and their students, leading to increased respect and compliance of students with teachers' directions, thus facilitating the educational process.
- ▶ Allowing teachers to build their relationship with their colleagues and director through implementation of common activities, increasing the degree of communication and psychological comfort in these relationships.
- ▶ Implementing activities helps teachers in releasing tension, increasing their level of energy and motivation, which benefits them throughout the day and enables them to better manage their class.

Positive Impact on Parents

- ▶ Parents' participation in activities has a positive effect on children's educational attainment, making them more aware of their responsibility to follow up on their child's education.
- ▶ Parents become dedicated and appreciative towards the school, as they note the positive change in their child's behavior and compliance due to releasing excess energy into extracurricular activities.
- ▶ Parents' discovery of their child's talents strengthens parents' hope for a promising future for their child.
- ▶ Parents' participation in extracurricular activities provides them with a source of entertainment and makes them feel satisfied and psychologically comfortable. It also reassures parents and increases their trust in teachers and school.
- ▶ Parents' participation in extracurricular activities improves the relationship between parents and school, making mutual respect the predominant way of dealing with each other, and tremendously decreasing tension and conflicts.

The Project: "Let's All Go to School Initiative"

Based on the foregoing, UNICEF, in close collaboration with Mada Association, took the initiative to implement the project "Let's All Go to School Initiative". The aim was to create a pleasant educational environment, where children can develop their abilities and talents, have space to express themselves, release psychological tension and develop their personality, with the ultimate goal to increase children's desire to attend school. The project sought to empower public schools with the capacity and experiences needed to be able to fundraise, plan and implement extracurricular activities, to establish a child friendly educational environment. In addition, the project aimed at activating the role of parents and motivating them to better follow up on their children at home and school.

Phases of the Project

- ▶ Preparing the human resources needed to organize extracurricular activities.
- ▶ Attracting volunteers, especially parents, and mobilizing them to become active.
- ▶ Establishing activity committees in schools and selecting activity coordinators.
- ▶ Building the capacity of activity committees and coordinators and activate them by holding weekly meetings.
- ▶ Drafting an annual action plan for extracurricular activities, including specific holidays and occasions.
- ▶ Drafting a detailed implementation plan for each activity mentioned in the annual action plan, including: timeframe classifying all steps of the activity implementation; defining the financial and human resources required for each activity; drafting a detailed budget per activity and a total budget for the overall annual activity action plan.
- ▶ Taking fundraising actions to finance the annual action plan for extracurricular activities:
 - Making use of the social network to attract financial and material resources, as well as services.
 - Approaching potential donors (individuals, organizations, municipalities, private sector) to ensure funds and equipment.
 - Organizing events to generate funds, for example teachers and students prepare items and sell them at school.



- ▶ Implementing the annual action plan for extracurricular activities.
- ▶ Integrating extracurricular activities into the curriculum and implementing them during school hours.
- ▶ Organizing awareness sessions for parents to integrate them in the educational process and encourage them to continuously communicate and cooperate with the school, while stressing on the importance of play and its positive impact on children's psychological status and educational attainment.

Project Results and Positive Impact

During the academic year 2012 - 2013, the schools participating in the project succeeded in achieving great results that positively impacted students as well as parents, directors, schools staff and the community at large. Of these results and impacts, we mention:

- ▶ Improvement in students' educational achievements and a noticeable decrease in the absence rates at school.
- ▶ Schools are equipped with the needed capacities and experiences and able to continue with the planning and implementation of extracurricular activities.
- ▶ Activity committees succeeded in mobilizing their surrounding community to help them in planning and implementing activities for children. They managed to attract over 105 volunteers. A huge number of parents volunteered to help out the school.
- ▶ School committees were able to finance many of their activities and managed to collect during the project period an amount of 11,339 US Dollars, in addition to equipment, materials and a number of services.
- ▶ Schools succeeded in building a sustainable network and established fruitful relations with active organizations. They managed to get invited to these organizations' activities, enabling schools to offer more entertainment and pleasure to their students.
- ▶ Establishing a positive school atmosphere and constructive relationship between all parties at school (students, teachers, director) as well as between parents and school.
- ▶ Implementing over 203 extracurricular activities during the academic year.
- ▶ Organizing a wide variety of activities: national, religious, recreational, trips, etc...
- ▶ Holding extracurricular activities in the classroom without costs (psycho-social, cultural, sports, etc...)⁷.
- ▶ Some of the participating schools managed to structure and expand the school building (i.e. adding rooms) and rehabilitate their playground.
- ▶ Increase in commitment to keep the school clean and volunteering to organize school cleaning up campaigns.
- ▶ Holding activities during break time with the participation of teachers and directors.
- ▶ Students are keener to satisfy their teachers and promised to achieve better and develop themselves.
- ▶ A significant decrease in conflicts and incidents of violence in school.

Challenges Faced by Schools and Solutions Found

Several obstacles challenged schools and Mada Association in implementing the project, but school committees worked hard, in collaboration with all the parties, to overcome these obstacles and turn them into a success. Among the challenges faced, is worthy to be mentioned:

- ▶ The shortage or lack of access to the necessary resources (physical, financial, human) to implement activities.
- ▶ The unavailability of specialized staff such as sport and art teachers.
- ▶ The lack of specialized hours in the school curriculum dedicated to extracurricular activities.
- ▶ The poor status of the school building and lack of equipment.
- ▶ The lack of funds for extracurricular activities and school funds are limited and mostly used to cover more basic needs.
- ▶ The prevailing state of depression in most schools and stakeholders' acceptance of the status quo and lack of believe in their ability to organize activities and bring about positive change.
- ▶ Poor access to models of extracurricular activities and a lack of knowledge on their content and method of application.

To overcome these challenges and alleviate their constraints, the participating schools applied the following steps:

- ▶ Implementing easily applicable and no-cost activities.
- ▶ A good planning of the activity and setting up an activity calendar at the beginning of the academic year.
- ▶ Raising the awareness of students and their parents on the importance of activities and their objectives, by organizing a first event, inviting parents and stimulating them to become volunteers and assist the school in organizing future activities.
- ▶ Organizing a variety of activities in school that are accessible for all students (wall newspaper, decorating the classrooms for special occasions, etc...).
- ▶ Finding alternative locations suitable to implement activities (municipal sports grounds, forestation areas, public libraries, clubs, etc...).
- ▶ Securing funds through social relations' networks and funds generating initiatives (private donors, selling popcorn at school, etc...).
- ▶ Stimulating municipalities, funding entities, organizations and other parties to support the activities financially and / or morally through participation and implementation.
- ▶ Using break time to implement extracurricular activities, i.e. a sport competition under the supervision of teachers.
- ▶ Close consultation and cooperation between the director and teachers to dedicate special hours for activities within the daily school schedule.
- ▶ Attracting volunteers with a variety of specializations to implement activities (i.e. talented volunteers in music, drawing, poetry, dance, handicrafts, sewing, etc...).
- ▶ All teachers and even the directors volunteered in the implementation of extracurricular activities (directors participated in a cultural and recreational activity, accompanied students during a trip, etc...).
- ▶ Dedicating five minutes of the regular class session to apply an activity that serves the objective of the lesson (i.e. playing a game in the mathematics hour related to numbers, implementing a short entertaining activity prior to a lesson that needs high concentration).
- ▶ Building the capacity of third cycle students to enable them to implement activities for the younger students of the first cycle and kindergarten.



Concluding Remarks

The above experience demonstrates that children just need someone to take their hand, encourage and guide them so they could continue their study, away from traumas and psychological distresses. Schools that have implemented the project "Let's All Go to School Initiative" succeeded to create a positive and inviting educational environment for all parties concerned, despite all the existing challenges. It is therefore, that UNICEF and Mada Association desired to share this successful experience with other schools and associations, by producing this guide, which helps any party to reach similar results and implement high impact activities with little costs.



Participants' Opinions



Teacher Rola Tannous (Akkar):

"Activities increased students desire to learn and created a strong relation between all parties"

Teacher Malak Jaber (Akkar):

"Everything has changed for the better: cleanliness, learning, student's educational achievements and their motivation. The smile is on everyone's face".



Teacher George Touma (Hermel):

"We are working all together, hand in hand, with joy and love. The children are listening much better to us now. The activities helped a lot in increasing student's responsiveness and participation in the classroom. They are more disciplined now".

Teacher Aida Al-Tachem (Hermel):

"If we don't succeed to attract funds, we are determined to continue organizing activities, even if it will be on our own expenses! The relation between us and our students has improved tremendously. We discovered one another".



Student Aghrar Omar (Akkar):

"I am so happy! Now I love to come to school every day. I thank my teachers for these activities".

Student Amani Al-Isa (Hermel):

"It is more pleasant here. I don't want to go back to Syria. I love my teachers, they have become like a mother to me, I can tell them everything"



Student Khaled Al-Sayyed (Akkar):

"We used to have nothing at school, now we have art and sports activities. I am so proud of myself; I was able to sing religious odes. Standing on stage really gives self-confidence".

**Student Nada Rasha'ini (Hermel):**

"The teacher, who does an activity with us, becomes close to us and we feel much more comfortable with him".

Student Mohamed Al-Isa (Hermel):

"I am very happy...The teachers are playing with us now during the break".

**Student Rasha Al-Abboush (Akkar):**

"Thank you my teachers, thank you Mada and UNICEF, I am a different person now... I was even able to write poetry".

Director Masarrah Hamada (Hermel):

"The school is now full of life and there is continuous activity. The absence rate has dropped tremendously and students are eager to come to school now".

**Director Khaled Isa (Akkar):**

"The school atmosphere has become one of unity and cooperation. Good relations developed between the school and the surrounding community, municipality and local NGO's. Parents have become very responsive to us and are volunteering and helping us".



Guide to Extracurricular Activities





Psycho - Social Activities

These include all activities contributing to psychological balance and social development of a child. They aim at helping a child in developing a balanced personality and becoming a righteous citizen able to be productive and functional anytime anywhere. Psycho-social activities also regulate the relationship between children and their society, and offer them with an opportunity to increase self-confidence and alleviate anxiety and psychological disorders. Through teamwork and interaction with the group, these activities help children in acquiring important social values such as tolerance, cooperation, responsibility and coping with life, while preventing segregation and selfishness.

1. Be Your Best

Duration: 30 – 40 minutes

Material: Nothing

Objective: Enhancing social spirit and reflecting on how we influence each other

Instructions:

The facilitator writes the following sentences on the board:

I will not ask you something you
cannot give

I will not ask you something unless
I really need it

I will not take anything without
giving back its corresponding value

► Allow children to think about these sentences for a minute. Ask them: To which extent can you help others to reach their best? Are you “selective or discriminating” in this matter? Are you helping one more than the other? If yes, who are you helping more and why?

► What would you feel if the others did not offer you what you need from them in order to reach your best?

2. What Do I Need to Be at My Best?

Duration: 20 – 30 minutes

Material: Nothing

Objective: Self-knowledge

Instructions:

Ask the children to fill in the following form and discuss it:

What do I need to be at my best:

From myself?

From the children in my class/ school?

From my family?

From my teacher?

3. The Family Groups

Duration: 35 – 45 minutes

Material: Pen and paper

Objective: Enhancing the social spirit by encouraging participants to get to know each other and build relationships within a small group.

Instructions:

- ▶ Divide participants into small groups of 4 to 5 persons, using innovative methods, such as the use of movement and music or coloured paper pieces.
- ▶ Each group takes pens and a paper and participants of each group work together to make a drawing that embodies the following:
- ▶ Group members' names and anything unique that identifies each person in the group. For example, learning to swim despite being aqua phobic, or being the first-born of 5 boys. Names should be written on the outskirts of the paper that will be hanged and decorated.
- ▶ 2 to 3 things the group members have in common. They should not be too evident like: "the whole group is formed of boys", neither "all of them have long hair". They should be more complex like for example: "all of them are vegetarians, like apples".
- ▶ Group's name or nickname.

4. About Kindness and Lack Thereof

Duration: 25 – 35 minutes

Material: Nothing

Objective: Self-knowledge through the other, empathy

Instructions:

- ▶ Think about an unkind way of speaking / behavior: Describe a situation in which you were exposed to a certain abuse because of the way in which others talked to you or talked about you or acted towards you.
- ▶ Why do you think you were targeted or treated that way?
- ▶ In addition to a feeling of hurt, what are the other emotions that you experienced?
- ▶ For you, what was the result of this way of speaking / behavior? How did it affect you?
- ▶ Did you take any measures or actions? If yes, what did you do? If no, why?
- ▶ As a user of an unkind way of speaking or behavior, describe a situation in which you have hurt someone by saying bad words to him or talked badly about him or behaved badly towards him.
- ▶ Why do you think you did that? How did you feel afterwards? How do you feel now?

5. You are a Miracle

Duration: 25 – 35 minutes

Material: Nothing

Objective: Self-value and the uniqueness of every person

Instructions:

The facilitator reads the following text and children explain and analyze it:

You are a miracle! Do you know what you are? You are a miracle! You are one of a kind! In all the years that past, there has been no one like you! You may become Shakespeare, or Michelangelo, or Beethoven. You have the ability to do anything!

Yes, you ARE a miracle! So..are you able then to hurt the other, who is like you: A MIRACLE? You should love one another.

You should work, no... WE should all work together to make the world a safer and more peaceful place.

6. Follow the Movement

Duration: 20 – 25 minutes

Material: Nothing

Objective: Thinking about how we influence each other

Instructions:

Ask children to stand in a circle. The goal is to remain motionless, but if someone makes a movement, the person who sees that move should imitate it, and since each child is monitored by another who is, in his turn, monitored by a third person, the movement will progressively be spread in the whole room without knowing who started the movement in the first place.

Group Discussion:

Did you like the game? Why? Why not? Did you notice that any of the movements you made was spread among the others? Do you feel that others may have an influence on you? How? Do you feel that you can have an influence on other persons? How? What can we do within our group so that we can have a positive influence on others?

7. Blind Trust⁸

Duration: 30 minutes

Material: Eye blindfolds

Core Values: Responsibility, cooperation and acceptance

Objective: Experiencing how a blind person feels and reflecting upon the following issues: The difficulties that persons with special needs face. How can we help in ensuring each other's safety? How can working together help us in achieving our goals?

Instructions:

- ▶ In the following game, children must have their eyes blindfolded.
- ▶ Divide children into pairs.
- ▶ Ask children to imagine that the room is the sky, full of dense fog and there are some planes lost in the fog. One child of each pair plays the role of the missing plane in the fog, while the other one takes the role of the pilot. Children who are playing the role of the plane should be blindfolded.
- ▶ Pilots stand behind the planes and have to direct their plane, without speaking or touching, by clapping with their hands in the direction they want the plane to move to.
- ▶ A few minutes later, ask the children to switch roles.
- ▶ You can later add some obstacles in the playing area, where pilots and planes are intended to conduct manoeuvres.

Group Discussion:

At end of the game, ask the children to reflect upon their experience. You can use the following questions: Did you enjoy the game? When you were unable to see, did you feel safe? Was the task of the guide easy? How can blind people stay safe? What about persons who have a disability? Think of the places where our group meets: what can we do to help those persons with special needs to move easier?

8. My Journal (Diary)

Duration: 40 – 60 minutes

Material: A drawing sketch book, a pencil, an eraser and a pack of coloring pencils per participant

Objectives: Self-knowledge and self-expression

Instructions:

- ▶ Distribute the material to the children.
- ▶ Writes the below titles on a big paper so that everyone can see them.
- ▶ Ask the children to choose 5 titles out of the total number and to work on them during the session (could be in writing and/or drawing).
- ▶ At the end of the session, the facilitator asks the children if they want to share their work in front of the larger group.

Titles:

My name	I'm afraid of	My life partner will be...
My nickname	Thanks to...	My favorite color, movie, book, food, sport, etc...
I love	My idol, and why?	If I was a leader for one day and I had the full authority to change one thing in my society, what would it be?
I hate	My slogan	
I will be...	My strengths are...	
My dreams	A story of my life...	

Note: The facilitator can participate in this activity and share one of his titles with the group. Activity can be repeated until all titles are covered. Titles could also be expanded and adjusted according to children's age.





Recreational and Child Rights Activities

These include all activities which purpose is to entertain children and provide them with pleasure. They include educational and leisure programs that benefit children and increase their awareness on the culture of human rights. Such activities also help children in spending their time acquiring positive skills, developing their personality and various mental abilities, while making a remarkable contribution to the expansion of their ideas, interests and values.

1. The Bowling Game

Duration: 25 – 30 minutes

Material: Small plastic bottles and a small ball

Objective: Developing the ability to focus

Instructions:

- ▶ The facilitator places a number of bottles (4 or more) on the floor in a straight line, about 2 or 3 meters long.
- ▶ Draw a line along this length.
- ▶ Ask the children to stand behind this line.
- ▶ Each child should try to knock down the bottles by throwing the ball.
- ▶ The one who is able to knock them all down is entitled to play again.
- ▶ We can start the game again as many times as we want. This would encourage the children to focus more and more and witness their progress.

2. Jumping over the Ropes

Duration: 30 minutes

Material: 2 ropes

Objective: Fun and developing motoric skills

Instructions:

- ▶ The facilitator places the 2 ropes on the floor, with a distance of 20 to 30 cm between them.
- ▶ He tells the children: "Imagine this is a small river".
- ▶ The children take turns trying to jump over the river.
- ▶ The ones who fall into the river cannot move anymore and are out of the game.
- ▶ The game can be repeated several times (3 to 4 times) and you can record the points for each child and the points are then added up.

3. The Treasure

Duration: 20 minutes

Material: Things that can represent the treasure (a book, a pen, a gift)

Objective: Fun, motivation towards work and perseverance

Instructions:

- ▶ Hide the treasure somewhere.
- ▶ Place papers with a word or sentence in several points to hint at the location of the treasure (for example: keep going straight, towards the left, turn

around). The hints could be related to the location of the treasure or to the locations of other hints leading to the treasure.

- ▶ The participant who first finds the treasure is the winner.

4. The Guessing Game

Duration: 15 minutes

Material: A bag of sweets and a jar

Objective: Fun

Instructions:

- ▶ The facilitator places a few sweets in the jar (depending on the number of participants).
- ▶ He asks each child to guess the number of sweets.
- ▶ Each child writes down his name and his guess on a paper and gives it to the facilitator.
- ▶ At the end of the game, the facilitator opens the papers and reads the numbers.
- ▶ The child that knows the right number or the number closest to the correct answer wins.
- ▶ The sweets are distributed to the children.

5. The Water Cup

Duration: 35 minutes

Material: 2 cups of water

Objective: Fun and increasing children's ability to focus

Instructions:

- ▶ Prepare 2 cups filled with an equal amount of water.
- ▶ Divide the children into 2 teams. Each team should be standing in a straight line.
- ▶ The cup is given to the child standing at the beginning of the line. He has to go around the playground holding the cup until he reaches the next person in his team and gives him the water cup.
- ▶ The next player goes round again until all the team members have had their turn.
- ▶ The winning team is the one that finishes first and has the most water remaining in the cup.

6. Memory Game

Duration: 25 minutes

Material: 12 pictures of different objects, a board

Objective: Fun and training the memory

Instructions:

- ▶ Stick 12 pictures of different objects on the board.

- ▶ Show the board to the children for a few seconds and quickly hide it.

- ▶ Give them a limited amount of time to remember the pictures that were shown (for example 2 minutes) and to write down the names of the objects they saw.
- ▶ The child that recalls the most objects is the winner.

7. Lighter than Air⁹

Duration: 20 minutes

Material: Feathers or balloons

Objective: Cooperation and team work

Instructions:

- ▶ Create teams composed of 2 or 3 children.
- ▶ Give each team a balloon, a feather or any other light object.
- ▶ Explain to the team members that they have to work together to keep the object flying in the air by blowing on it
- ▶ A competition between the teams is organized.
- ▶ The winning team is the one that is able to keep the object flying in the air the longest.

Group Discussion:

At the end of the game, ask the children to reflect on their experience. You can use the following questions: Did you like the game? What was the easiest part of the game? What was the most difficult part of the game? What strategy did you use to keep the object in the air? If you had the chance to play this game again, what would you do differently to keep the balloon in the air for a longer period of time? How does the group benefit from better cooperation? What can we do to better cooperate in our group?





Intellectual Activities

These include a wide range of activities, such as educational contests, seminars, lectures, exhibitions, the use of the school library, writing, reading, public speaking, newspapers, etc... In short, anything linked to the intellectual and cultural development of a child. These activities have the objective to increase children's knowledge and skills and help them develop their talents and creative abilities in the literary, cultural and scientific fields, in addition to scientific research and its various methods. Intellectual activities are moreover helpful in developing the children's language skills and their abilities to read and analyze.

1. Letters and Words

Duration: 10 minutes

Material: Pen and paper

Objective: Mastery of language and focusing on order

Instructions:

- ▶ Distribute a pen and a paper to each participant.
- ▶ Give 5 letters (for example: a-r-t-e-s).
- ▶ Give participants 10 minutes to find as many words as possible composed of these letters.
- ▶ The first participant that can write down 8 words is the winner (for example: art, tear, tears, rat, rats, rate, rates, are, ear, eat, eats, ate, tea, teas, star, stare, sat, sate, as, at, etc...).

2. The Word List

Duration: 10 minutes

Material: Pen and paper

Objective: Increase the ability to remember and rapidly implement

Instructions:

- ▶ Each participant is given a pen and paper and asked to get ready to write.
- ▶ The facilitator quickly reads any list of words.
- ▶ At the end the facilitator immediately collects the papers.
- ▶ The participant who has written the most words is the winner.

Note: The trick in this game is to use words which share some letters, but have very different meanings, for example: herd, heard, beard, hard, card, bird, third, let, met, set, sat, hat, heat, beat, need, seed, read, etc...

3. The Shopping List

Duration: 30 minutes

Material: None

Objective: Activation of memory and increased ability to focus

Instructions:

- ▶ Let the children sit in a circle.

- ▶ The first child says “I went shopping and I bought...”, adding the name of the object.
- ▶ The next child repeats what the first child says and adds another object.
- ▶ Same for the third and fourth child and so on, until one of the players forgets an object and is eliminated from the game.
- ▶ The last remaining child is the winner.

Note: The size of the group should preferably not exceed 10 children, to keep it dynamic and fun for all, especially when the children are under the age of ten.

4. The Game of Zero and One

Duration: 20 minutes

Material: None

Objective: Concentration and number memorization

Instructions:

- ▶ Form teams of 4 participants each, standing in a straight line.
- ▶ Read different numbers composed of 0s and 1s (see below).

Examples:

0011 - 0001 - 1011 - 0010 - 1001

- ▶ According to a child's place in the line, the child who is supposed to represent a 0 sits down and the one representing the 1 remains standing.
- ▶ The team that manages to most successfully represent the sequence is the winner, after 5 trials.

5. The Digits Game

Duration: 25 minutes

Material: None

Objective: Activation of memory and number memorization

Instructions:

- ▶ The facilitator says a number composed of 3 digits.
- ▶ The children repeat the number in reverse order.
- ▶ For example the facilitator says 394 and the child says 493.
- ▶ The facilitator says a number composed of 4 digits such as 8537, so they answer 7358.
- ▶ The facilitator gradually increases the number of digits.
- ▶ The person with the best memory is the one who manages to repeat the largest number.

Note: The facilitator should prepare a list of numbers on a paper.

6. Find the Common Link

Duration: 15 minutes

Material: A pen and paper

Objective: Increased ability to conclude and infer

Instructions:

- ▶ Place groups of words with a common link. Prepare a minimum 5 different groups.
- ▶ Ask the children to find the common link.
- ▶ The participant having the highest average is the winner.

Examples:

- ▶ Pigeon - Falcon - Eagle - Hawk - Swallow (Birds).
- ▶ Apple - Olive - Peach - Almond - Pear (Fruit trees).
- ▶ Oak - Cedar - Poplar - Cypress - Willow (Non productive trees).
- ▶ Chair - Table - Closet - Bed - Television (Home furniture).
- ▶ Notebook - Pen - Sharpener - Eraser - Board (School supplies).

7. The Letters Game

Duration: 10 minutes

Material: Copies of a text printed on paper

Objective: Memorizing letters and increasing the ease of reading

Instructions:

- ▶ The facilitator prepares a text and prints it on a paper.
- ▶ He distributes the printed text to each student. Each participant is asked to circle a particular letter within the text (for example the letter f).
- ▶ We ask the children to count the reoccurrence of this letter at the end of the process.
- ▶ After 10 minutes, the facilitator collects the papers. Children have the correct number of occurrences are the winners.



Sports Activities¹⁰

These include all sports and motoric activities that are suitable with children's abilities, as well as all scientific and theoretical aspects of movement and physical activity. Sports activities enable a child to enjoy a good physical and emotional wellbeing. They aim at developing a child's motoric skills and sportive talents, while learning about positive sports competitions through participation in "recreational" sports events under the guidance of specialized trainers. Sports activities also allow children to acquire important social skills and values, such as teamwork, cooperation, fair play and serving their community. Moreover, these activities develop the child's mental capacity, decrease laziness, while bringing joy and happiness to children.

1. The Cat and Mouse Game

Location: Playground

Duration: 30 minutes

Material: A big ball and a small ball

Objective: Physical exercise and learning to play in a group

Instructions:

- ▶ The players stand in a circle, separated from each other by a distance of 2 arms length.
- ▶ There are 2 balls used in this game. The large one represents the cat and the small one the mouse.
- ▶ The first player starts passing the big ball (symbolizing the cat) to the second player in the row, and the small ball (symbolizing the mouse) to the third player. The same action is repeated by each player when receiving one of the balls.
- ▶ The balls should be passed in the same direction.
- ▶ The dynamic of this game is that at a certain point,

the cat will be able to get a hold of the mouse. The player that ends up with the 2 balls in his hands will be penalized and has to sit on the floor stretching his legs. His neighbor will have to pass over him to give the ball to the next player in the row.

2. The Ball Collection Game

Location: Playground

Duration: 20 minutes

Material: 16 balls of the same size and eye blindfolds

Participants: 20 children

Objective: Physical exercise, teamwork and trust

Instructions:

- ▶ Divide the participants into 4 teams and assign a team leader to guide each team.
- ▶ The facilitator draws 8 big circles on the playground floor, that are opposite and parallel to

each other. A distance of 2 steps separates each circle width wise and 20 steps lengthwise.

- ▶ Place 4 balls in the first 4 circles.
- ▶ In each team, 4 blindfolded players stand in front of the first circle, with their guide beside them.
- ▶ After hearing the starting whistle, the first player from each team starts, followed by the second player, until the fourth. This takes place with the help of the team leader who is supposed to guide them.
- ▶ Each blindfolded player is supposed to pick up a ball and bring it to the opposite circle.
- ▶ The first team that transfers the 4 balls to the next circle is the winner.

3. The Teacher Says

Location: A big room

Duration: 15 minutes

Material: None

Objective: Fun, concentration and reflex

Instructions:

- ▶ The facilitator stands in front of the participants and explains the rules of the game, by demonstrating:

The teacher says: "Stand" -
so everyone has to stand

The teacher says: "Sit" -
so everyone sits

- ▶ When the facilitator says "Stand" without first saying "The teacher says", no one must stand. The participant who stands without paying attention is out of the game.
- ▶ The facilitator starts again with various other commands such as: "The teacher says: raise your left hand", then says "Lower it" without saying "The teacher says".
- ▶ Every participant who makes a mistake or hesitates is eliminated.
- ▶ The facilitator continues the game until the remaining participant wins.

4. The Windmills

Location: Playground

Duration: 40 minutes

Material: 5 handkerchiefs and material to blindfold the participants

Participants: 15 children (10 mills and 5 millers)

Objective: Physical exercise and concentration

Instructions:

- ▶ 10 blindfolded players are standing in a circle, holding hands with each other.
- ▶ The facilitator stands in the centre of the circle with 5 napkins and raises them with both raised hand.
- ▶ The 5 millers stand outside the circle and have the mission to take the handkerchiefs from the facilitator. They must try to quietly access the inside of the circle and exit discreetly without touching any of the mills, that are allowed to move with their hands without changing the shape of the circle or changing their places. Any miller who comes into contact with a mill is removed.
- ▶ The team that manages to get 3 handkerchiefs out of the circle is the winner.

5. The Wolf and the Lamb

Location: Playground

Duration: 25 minutes

Material: None

Objective: Physical exercise and fun

Instructions:

- ▶ 20 players (or less) line up holding each other from the waist. The first 5 are considered wolves, while the rest are lambs.
- ▶ The game starts when the facilitator gives the starting signal. The first wolf moves, followed by everyone else behind him, and tries to grab a lamb by the waist, which is the last player in row.
- ▶ If he grabs the lamb at the waist, the lamb is out and the game starts again. But the wolf is out of the game if he touches the lamb without managing to hold it from the waist.
- ▶ If the wolves are not able to catch 5 lambs, they lose, and if more than 3 wolves are out, they also lose.

6. Pulling the Rope - The Balance Game

Location: Playground

Duration: 20 minutes

Material: A rope

Objective: The value of cooperation and physical exercise

Instructions:

- ▶ Divide the participants into 2 groups. Each group

brainstorms and distinguishes itself from the other group through certain qualities shared by the participants, that are different from the qualities that characterize the other group.

► The game starts and each group starts to pull the rope from its side. When the facilitator notices that one team is close to winning, he asks one of its team players to leave the rope and to reveal a quality he likes in the other team, and he is then asked to join the other team and to help it pull the rope. This is done several times, according to the need.

Note: This game is designed to achieve balance and is not meant to be a triumph of one team over another.

7. The Sardine

Duration: 10 – 20 minutes

Material: None

Objective: Entertainment, experiencing the feeling of partnership and reflecting about the following issues: How can we cooperate in order to make room for others? How does cooperation lead to positive results?

Instructions:

- Choose a child to be the first sardine fish that hides. Ask other children to close their eyes when the sardine hides.
- Ask the children to open their eyes and try to find the sardine fish. When a child finds the sardine fish, he becomes himself a sardine fish and he must hide himself in the same place together with the first sardine fish.
- Continue to play until all the children have found and joined the first sardine fish. Then let the group know that all sardine fishes are winners!

Group Discussion:

At the end, ask the children to reflect on their experience. You can use the following questions: Did you like this game? Why? Why not? What did you feel when you were all stuffed together like sardines? Is it easy for everyone to hide in one place? Why? Why not? What did you do to help others to hide? Is it easy to always accept others in the games you play? Why? Why not? What can we do to make sure that everyone feels welcome in our group?



Environmental Activities

These include all activities directly linked to the environment such as: environmental trips, village cleaning up campaigns, reforestation initiatives, awareness campaigns on hygiene and environmental conservation, as well as any activities that help in increasing children's knowledge on environmental terms and components (water, soil, forests, air) and ways to protect nature. These activities also aim to develop children's skills in environmental protection, trigger behavioral change and foster in them a sense of responsibility towards protecting the environment, which is eventually crucial for the sustainable development of the community.

1. Recycling Art''

Duration: 30 – 40 minutes

Material: An empty (cheese) box, colored papers, pens, glue, scissors

Objective: Increasing environmental awareness, the importance of recycling

Instructions:

- ▶ The facilitator asks each child to bring with him an empty box (of cheese).
- ▶ The facilitator helps the children to wrap each side of the (cheese) box with colored papers.
- ▶ A flower is drawn on a paper and colored.
- ▶ The flower is glued to the wrapped (cheese) box.
- ▶ The result is a decorated box that can be used to store pens, buttons, etc...

Note: We can use a variety of materials, such as empty egg cartons, tissue boxes, etc...

2. I Love my Forest

Duration: 30 – 40 minutes

Material: Colored cardboard, coloring pens, scissors, glue

Objective: Environmental conservation & protection of trees from cutting

Instructions:

- ▶ The facilitator prepares the main trunk of the tree out of brown cardboard and hangs it on the

classroom wall.

- ▶ The class is divided into 2 groups.
- ▶ The facilitator asks the first group to prepare the branches of the tree from the cardboard.
- ▶ The second group makes circles with the cardboard (supposed to be the leaves).
- ▶ The children stick the branches to the trunk on the wall in order to get the shape of a tree.
- ▶ Brainstorm with the children about the benefits of trees, and ask the children to write the benefits of the tree on the circles and to stick them to the branches of the tree.

3. Unscramble the Environmental Terms

Duration: 20 minutes

Material: None

Objective: Introduction to environmental concepts, speed of focus and attention

Instructions:

- ▶ Divide the children into 2 groups.
- ▶ The facilitator says or writes the word that is to be discovered after changing first the order of its letters. For example:
akel_lake / rolap_polar / dinw_wind / oferts_forest
wemldont_meltdown
- ▶ The group that first guesses the word gets a point.

Note: In order to obtain the best results, it is recommended to include a minimum of 15 words in each activity.





Artistic Activities

These include all kind of arts, such as drawing, handicrafts, sculpture, drama, music, etc... Art activities develop the creative abilities of the child, such as: imagination, focus, attention, determination and carefulness, hence helping increasing a child's intelligence, language abilities and capacity to reach social harmony. These activities also enhance children's self-confidence, which instills in them courage and initiative. Through the creative process, children are able to express themselves and communicate with others about their feelings, wishes and opinions. Due to their recreational benefits, these activities also help in improving the image of the school in the eyes of the children.

1. The Music Circle

Duration: 30 minutes

Material: Music

Objective: Sense of rhythm, attention and focus

Instructions:

- ▶ The facilitator draws a circle on the floor.
- ▶ The children move around the circle on the sound of music.
- ▶ When the music stops, the children jump into the circle.
- ▶ The one, who is too late, is removed from the game. The music continues and the last remaining child (or group of children) is the winner.

2. The Classroom Flowers

Duration: 45 minutes

Material: Colored cardboard, scissors, coloring pens, glue and preferably small picture of each child

Objective: Artistic, sense of belonging to a group and self-esteem

Instructions:

- ▶ Cut circles out of colored cardboard corresponding to the number of children in the group.
- ▶ Give a circle to each child.
- ▶ The name or picture of the child is placed in the centre of the circle.
- ▶ The circles are hung somewhere at a height that

the children can reach them.

- ▶ We ask each child to pass in front of the circles and write a positive quality about his friend.
- ▶ When finished writing, we ask the children to colour and decorate the circles using different colors, turning them into flowers.
- ▶ Finally, the flowers are collected and hung on a big cardboard, creating a bouquet of flowers.
- ▶ Note: You can create several designed (for example a train, butterflies, fish, etc...).

3. The Time Machine

Duration: 45 minutes

Material: 2 empty plastic bottle, some sand, play dough, scotch tape

Objective: Understanding the value of time through art

Instructions:

- ▶ Close the nozzle of the bottle with play dough, leaving a very narrow passage.
- ▶ Fill the other bottle to the half with sand.
- ▶ Turn the bottle nozzle upside down and place it on the other bottle's nozzle, stick it properly onto it using the scotch tape.
- ▶ Turn the bottle to measure the time needed for the sand to completely pass from one bottle to the other. This time is remembered and becomes your measuring unit.

Note: This time machine can be used by the children in other activities to keep the time.



Reference Material on Different Types of Activities

- «Peindre et dessiner», Bordas, Larousse.
«Le livre d'art, encyclopédie illustrée de la peinture du dessin et de la sculpture», Grolier.
«Pièces pour marionnettes», Evelyne Lecucq, Retz.
«Jouons la comédie - 10 comédies pour enfants», collection histoires en dialogue
«L'atelier des petits bricoleurs, 5 – 10 ans, plus de 120 activités pour toutes les occasions», sélection du Reader's Digest.
«Perles de Rocaille fantaisie», Christine Hooghe, Editions Fleurus.
«Merveilleux Poissons», Christine Hooghe, Editions Fleurus.
«Les jeux de la mer», textes et jeux du Philippe Dupuis, Edition de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux.
«Les jeux du moyen âge», textes et jeux du Philippe Dupuis, Edition de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux.
«Pâte à sel, des modèles très originaux», MFG Atelier.
«Bijoux et accessoires à réaliser soi-même», MFG Atelier (Petit artiste).
«Pompes à réaliser soi-même», MFG Atelier.
«Créations en cartons ondulés à réaliser soi-même», MFG Atelier.
«Petits objets en modelage à réaliser soi-même», MFG Atelier.
«Petits objets en galets, à réaliser soi-même», MFG Atelier.
«Activités manuelles avec des matériaux naturels», Chantecler, Son Tyberg.
«60 maquillages pour les fêtes», Dessain et Tolra, Erick Aveline et Joyce Coleman.
«Avions de papier», Didier Boursin, Dessain et Tolra.
«Le grand livre des jeux pour les enfants de 2 à 8 ans», Amazon.
«Le grand livre des jeux 2-250 jeux pour enfants», Amazon.
«Boîte 52 drôles de choses à faire en voiture Jeux d'enfants», Amazon.
«Jeux de relaxation: Pour des enfants détendus et attentifs», (1CD audio), De Boeck. Nicole Malenfant.
«Childcraft - Make and Do», World Book International, a World Book Company, Chicago-London-Sydney.
«Childcraft - Art Around Us», World Book International, a World Book Company, Chicago - London - Sydney.
«Un vrai jeu d'enfant», Fleuve Noir. François-Xavier Dillard.
«Le petit enfant au quotidien», Nicole Malenfant, De Boeck.
«Charades pour enfants: 100 jeux de charades pour enfants», Claude Marc.
«Préparez votre enfant à l'école, 500 jeux psychomoteurs pour les enfants», Louise Doyon.
«Le théâtre un jeu d'enfant», Dominique Lambert.
«Le petit Nicolas, Le grand livre d'activités», Delphine Bourgoïn.
«L'école - Décors et gommettes», Patrick Chauvet.
«Jeux de doigts, rondes et jeux dansés», Solange Sanchis.

- «ألعاب من أجل حقوق الإنسان»، إكويتاس : المركز الدولي للتربية على حقوق الإنسان.
«برنامج FUNDACIO - FCBarcelona»، FutBolNet، عمان.
«تعو تحكي - لعبة عن تحويل النزاع بين الأشخاص في لبنان»، ALEF الجمعية اللبنانية للتربية والتنشئة.
«جعبة حقوقي»، مؤسسة تالة للوسائل التربوية.
«سوا سوا نلعب ونتعلم»، Save the Children.
«إرسم وتعلم مع الأرقام من واحد إلى أربعين»، الدار العربية للعلوم ناشرون.
«تعال نرسم خطوة خطوة»، الدار العربية للعلوم ناشرون.
«بناء ثقافة حقوق الإنسان لدى قادة الغد»، مصادر تدريبية ٢٠١١.
«نشاطات بناءة وألعاب مفيدة»، بوب مافيت، دار منهل الحياة.
«أنشطة المدرسة والبيت»، مكتبة لبنان ناشرون، سلسلة أنشطة وهوايات.
«أنشطة القيم الحية للأطفال»، دايان تيلمان، الدار العربية للعلوم ناشرون.
«لنعمل معاً: إدارة سلوكيات الأطفال، مرجع لجميع من يعمل مع أطفال الغير»، Save the Children.
«دليل المعلم في الصف: توصيات عملية لتعليم فعال»، Save the Children.
«خطوة أبعد - دليل مناصرة للأطفال والشباب»، Save the Children.
«عملية جمع البيانات لقيادة الأطفال - دليل خاص بالأطفال حول كيفية إجراء الأبحاث و إحداث تغيير إيجابي»، Save the Children.
«كيف ننظم ورشة عمل تدريبية على مشاركة الأطفال، دليل المدرّب»، منظمة اليونيسف.
«كيف ننظم ورشة عمل تدريبية على حقوق الطفل، دليل المدرّب»، منظمة اليونيسف.

Endnotes

¹ Source: “Investigating the Reasons for High Dropout Rates in Upper Akkar”, Mada Association.

² An overview of references and guides specialized in various types of activities is available at the end of the guide.

³ The 4 schools in Akkar: Deir Dalloum Public School, Wadi Al-Jamous Public School, Fnaidiq Public Schools for Girls, Fnaidiq Al-Gharbiye. The 8 schools in Hermel: Hermel First Complementary School, Hermel Second Complementary Public School, Hermel Third Complementary Public School, Sahlet Al-May Public School, Beit Al-Tachem Public School, Qasr Complementary School, Kweikh Complementary School, Bouayda Complementary School.

⁴ The regions of Akkar and Hermel record the highest poverty rates at the national level: 63% of the families residing in Akkar suffer from poverty and 62% in Hermel. Sources: “Population and Housing Survey”, the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) and UN Population Fund (UNFPA), 1996 and 2004. “Akkar: a Story of Deprivation”, UNDP and MoSA, February 2000.

⁵ In Akkar, illiteracy rates reach the highest across Lebanon, with 30.5% for both sexes (Lebanon 13.6%). Source: Survey of Population and Housing, the MoSA and UNFPA, 1996 and 2004.

⁶ Sources: “Investigating the Reasons for High Dropout Rates in Upper Akkar” and “The Voice of Akkari Youth: Calling for a Better Tomorrow”, Mada Association.

⁷ A variety of these activities is provided in the second part of this guide.

⁸ Source: “Games for Human Rights”, EQUITAS - International Center for Human Rights Education.

⁹ Source: “Games for Human Rights”, EQUITAS - International Center for Human Rights Education.

¹⁰ Source: “FutBolNet Program”, FUNDACIO – FCBarcelona, Oman.

¹¹ Source: “سوا سوا نلعب ونتعلم”, Save the Children.



Happy Activities !



