

PROTECTING CHILDREN IN EMERGENCIES

SAVE THE CHILDREN AND EMERGENCIES IN RWANDA

Save the Children has been helping children in emergency situations in Rwanda since 1994. Currently, Save the Children is working in Nkamira Transit Centre and Kigeme Refugee Camp in partnership with UNHCR and unicef. These two camps accommodate refugees who have been fleeing violence and unrest in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in significant numbers since May 2012. There are now approximately 7000 refugees in Nkamira and 17,000 in Kigeme, with around 90% of these being women and children. Save the Children has been working with the camp management committees in both camps to ensure that child protection mechanisms are in place to respond to any issues of child abuse or exploitation.



CHILD PROTECTION IN EMERGENCIES

Child Protection is even more vital during emergencies where because of the chaotic and transient nature of transit centres and refugee camps. The vast majority of refugees coming to Rwanda are women and children and there are large numbers of unsupervised children in the camps. This means that children are at a high risk of exploitation and abuse because of the lack of supervision or organised activities. With no structure to their days and nothing to occupy them, children often spend their time running behind the large trucks bringing

new refugees and supplies. They are also at risk of being neglected by parents who are anxious and distressed as a result of recent upheaval and trauma. Another important problem is the provision of education. In emergency situations children's access to education is cut-off and this can cause serious damage to their progress at school. Save the Children's response to emergencies involves addressing all the risks and provide supervision, fun, education, and child protection

CHILD-FRIENDLY SPACES IN EMERGENCIES

One of the greatest problems during an emergency situation is the lack of supervision and neglect as a result of the chaotic nature of transit centres and refugee camps. There is very little for children to do in refugee camps and this means that there is an increased risk of abuse. Save the Children establishes child-friendly spaces as part of its emergency response. There are huge constraints on space in refugee camps so the CFSs are usually informal fenced-off areas where volunteers from the refugee community, trained by Save the Children carry out activities. While these activities could be anything from football to dance, they often include an element of education. Children are taught about issues such as hygiene and child protection in groups with children of a similar age. Save the Children volunteers often organise a weekly show for the whole camp, where children perform plays and dances that they have been perfecting during the week. These activities offer a sense of normalcy and fun to children who have been uprooted from their homes. It is also essential for parents as they can have piece of mind for a few hours each day, knowing their children are engaged in safe, stimulating activities.



CHILD RIGHTS TRAINING IN EMERGENCIES

While child-friendly spaces are a central element of Save the Children's work during emergencies, child rights training also plays an important role. Save the Children has been establishing child protection mechanisms in both Nkamira and Kigeme where there were previously none. This involves training volunteers from amongst the refugees in child protection and child rights. These volunteers – known as 'Nkundabana' or 'We love children' in Kinyarwanda - take on the important role of monitoring child protection issues in the camp. Their week-long training involves creating action plans and determining safe spaces where abuse can be reported. Often a desk is set up These volunteers monitor child protection in the camps, and man desks where child abuses can be reported.



ECCD WORK IN EMERGENCIES

Save the Children has been carrying out work in Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) across Rwanda. This work involves constructing purpose-built ECCD centres, developing sustainable wooden toys and furniture, and training caregivers. During emergencies, education, especially for the youngest children aged 3-6, breaks down. Children are often unable to go to school and Save the Children has been working to provide ECCD to children in Nkamira Transit Camp. Two new centres have been built for the dual purpose of educating and protecting the young children in the camp. The ECCD centres prevent the children in the camp from falling behind in their education, as well as providing fun and interactive activities designed to improve the young children's developmental skills (cognitive, language, socio-behavioural, fine and gross motor skills). The activities are also a welcome distraction from the chaotic nature of life during an emergency and allows

