



HELPING CHILDREN WHO DO NOT GO TO SCHOOL

THE IDEA

In many countries more than half the children under 15 do not go to school at all, or leave school very early. They stay at home to look after the younger ones, or to work in the house or the fields. Although the situation varies from country to country, the majority of them are girls.

Schoolchildren can help those who are not at school by sharing their activities with them. They can play simple reading or counting games with them, and pass on simple health ideas learned in school. Children who do not go to school have much to share with those who do. The child at school must look on the child out of school as a friend and partner, not as one who is less important or who knows less.

What children can do together

There are many things that children who are in school can do to help children who are not at school, including:

- talking, and sharing ideas.
- helping with counting, reading and writing.
- sharing knowledge, especially about health through creating games, songs and role-plays.

These stories show how children who have not gone to school can help themselves and be helped by other children.

Keo's story

Keo was a farmer's son. He came into the city and worked for a rich family. One of his tasks was to take one of the younger children to school. But Keo decided that he too needed to learn to read and write. With the help of the older children in the family, he taught himself,



using first the simple books of the younger children, and then the books of older friends. Later the family he worked for paid for his schooling, and he was able to go to university.

Where and how these activities have been used

This sheet is particularly important in countries where not all children go to school or where many children drop out early (or are kept away from school to help in the home). Often this second group may have begun to learn how to read and count but may have forgotten.

Parents and other adults need, whenever possible, to help schoolchildren use this sheet. They can help them find and make reading and counting material. In Palestine, Kenya and Afghanistan, children are being encouraged to write their own simple books which can then be used for reading practice.

Remember when using this sheet that out-of-school children are not second-class children. They have much to teach as well as much to learn. They often have very interesting stories to tell and important experiences to share. **Together** children in school and out-of-school can take health action and solve health problems.

Kamala and Subira's story

Kamala and Subira became close friends. As soon as Kamala had learned to read she had to leave school, to look after two little boys at home. Subira was luckier. She stayed on at school and is now in the sixth class. But every day when she comes home, she talks with Kamala and helps her with her reading. They go out together in the street, and play at recognising all the writing on the shops and on the advertisements.

Next year, Kamala will join a special evening class and continue her studies. She hopes one day to become a teacher of young children.



Activities

Talking together

Children can tell each other stories.

Children who go to school can read stories to their friends. If the child at home knows some good stories, the schoolchild can write them down, and they can then read them together, and then make pictures about them. Remember that talking about things helps reading about them.

Children can share '**what happened today**'. Children from school can talk about some of the things that happened at school, and some of the things they have learned. Children at home can tell about what happened at home and in the neighbourhood while their friends were at school. Children from school can also share stories from the newspaper about world events with children who do not go to school.

Learning to count, read and write

Children who cannot count, read, or write often feel unhappy, especially if there are many other children in the community who can. By teaching them some simple things, we can help them to be less 'different' from others, and also show them that they can learn new things easily. Then they will have some of the skills they will need when they are older.

Schoolchildren can teach their friends to **count**:

- to learn to count the numbers from one to ten.
- to be able to recognise and write them.
- to add and subtract simple sums.
- to use small amounts of money, and count the change.

Remember: Always use real objects when teaching others to count or add or subtract. Use stones, sticks, real or copied coins.

Children can teach their friends to begin reading and writing. Write on the ground if there is no paper or slate, and help them:

- to learn the alphabet.
- to recognise and write the letters.
- to write their name.
- to recognise and write the names of other people in the family.
- to read numbers and signs in the street (if they live in town).
- to read or even write some simple names of objects around the house which are used every day.



Later on in this sheet there are some simple number and reading games that children can make.

Schoolchildren can try to help their friends to learn anything else which they want to learn, for example how to write a short letter, how to address and post the letter, how to use the library (if they live in town), how to get to different places. In this way, children who are not at school can feel less alone and can look after their own families better when they grow up.

Passing on health messages

The child in school and the child at home can, if they work together, help to improve the health of younger children and the whole family. The child in school may learn very important health messages, and many of these are described in other Child-to-Child Activity Sheets. In each one, there are ways for the children to work together, so that all the children can take part in community health activities. Some examples of community health activities include puppet shows, dramas and singing songs about health messages. In this way, the schoolchild and the child who stays at home can together help to improve the health of the whole community, while developing important life skills such as leadership, communication and empathy.

What children can do together

Make toys and play with the young ones, using Activity Sheets 1.1 and 1.2 **Playing with Young Children.**

Protect water sources and keep drinking water clean at home, using Activity Sheet 3.3 **Children's Faeces and Hygiene.**

See that little children use the latrine and wash their hands, using Activity Sheet 3.4 **Clean, Safe Water.**

Identify health problems in their community, using Activity Sheet 3.5 **Our Neighbourhood.**

Make their homes and surroundings safer, using Activity Sheet 4.1 **Preventing Accidents.**

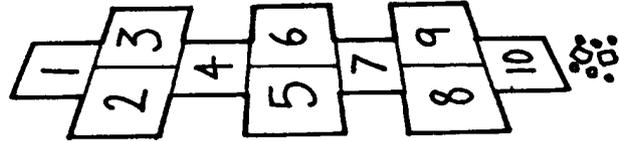
Learn to make and give rehydration drinks when they see that a child is ill with diarrhoea, using Activity Sheet 6.1 **Caring for Children with Diarrhoea.**

Inform all the families near them when the immunisation team is due to arrive, using Activity Sheet 6.4 **Immunisation.**

Making number and counting games

Number games

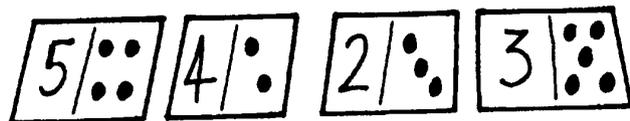
Play number games like this (or make up another one like it):



Draw squares on the ground like this, and number them. Throw the right number of stones into the right space. Then learn to copy and write the numbers in the sand, or with chalk or on paper.

Practise finding numbers together in the streets, finding and telling where people live, collecting car numbers. Think of other ways to play with and use numbers you see in the street.

Make dominoes, and match the dots with the numbers.



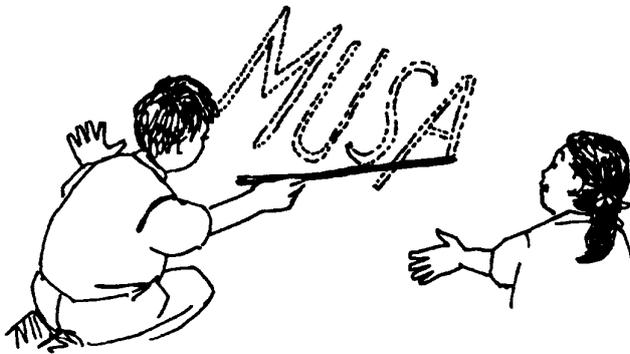
Counting games

- Sing counting songs: use familiar ones or make your own.
- Count fingers and toes, backwards as well as forwards.
- Count familiar objects (like stones and leaves), and things around us (like animals, plants and people).
- Count animals in the evening; count produce for market.
- Play shop, learn to give change (paper money can be made at school), and then go shopping together.

Make reading and writing games

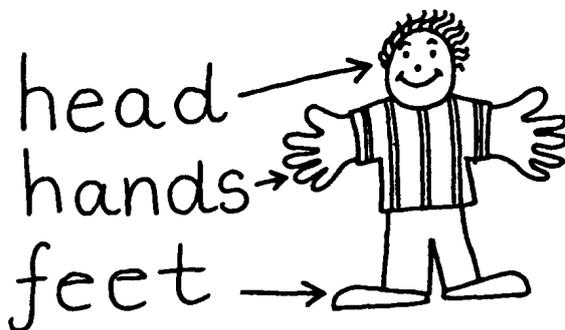
Alphabet games

Make an alphabet book at school, perhaps with cloth. Make a set of alphabet cards with a small letter on each card. Draw a picture of a word beginning with each letter on another set of cards. Help match the picture cards to the letter cards. Make a set of cards with capital letters. Help match the small alphabet cards with the capital letter cards. Help children spell out their names, and the names of their friends, using the capital letter cards and the small alphabet cards. Children can also practise writing the letters by copying the letters on the ground with a small stick, or by making their own cards.

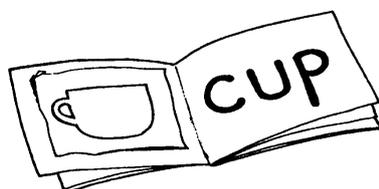


Reading and writing games

Label and read the names of parts of the body, and familiar objects in the house and garden. Make messages and act them out to each other. Read signs in the shops and around town. The child who is at school can help the child at home to write his first letter.



Make a picture book for baby. The school child can make it at school. The child who is at home can read it to baby, and that way he will learn too.



Follow-up

Find out how many of the children have younger brothers and sisters, or older brothers and sisters who stay at home. Why do they stay at home? Have they been to school at all? Can they read, write and count? Share experiences.

How many of the schoolchildren have helped those at home? Ask them to tell stories about what they did for children at home. How can they do better next time? What games were best for teaching counting and number skills? What games were best for teaching letters, reading, writing? Did anyone think of new games for teaching these skills?

USING THIS SHEET

It is not easy to teach others to read and write, or to teach health ideas so they are clearly understood. If children want to help those who are not at school, they will have to continue for a long time. They will need help and ideas and encouragement from others. Youth leaders, religious leaders, community workers and especially teachers can help in many different ways. They can:

- discuss with children how they can help others at home.
- help them to plan the help they can give.
- show them how to make educational materials.
- talk about what they are doing with others who are not at school, and how they can do better.

At school, perhaps some lesson time can be used for developing language and reading games for non-schoolchildren. Materials for reading and counting games can be made during art and craft time, for example, or even during the reading or maths lesson. In this way, schoolchildren can use and improve their own skills, and at the same time make useful materials to share with the others.

All children of all ages can help. This is an activity where younger children who are lucky enough to go to school can help older ones who are not, and can look at what they have learned at the same time as teaching it to others.