

# Child Protection Network (Early Childhood Development Center) Nepal

## Child Protection

*An Early Childhood Development Center was established in early 2012, located in the host community area close to Sanischare refugee camp. The center provides full day care services for refugee and host community children aged 2-5 years, thereby facilitating their mothers' participation in livelihood opportunities. The center has the capacity to accommodate for 30 children at one time and it is staffed with three trained individuals (2 from the refugee community and 1 from the host community). The center offers adequate care arrangements, access to age appropriate developmental activities as well as toys and games and access to health care. There is also an outdoor area available for activities. Food needs to be provided by the children's own family members.*



UNHCR/ Sangita Khatiwada

## Background

Child protection concerns are prevalent within the Bhutanese refugee camps. In late 2011, semi-structured interviews as well as focus group discussions were undertaken with single mothers, GBV survivors and community-based organizations working with children in the camps to identify major protection concerns for children below school age. Through these activities, issues identified included lack of adequate supervision for children whose parents work, concern around quality of care for children under 5 who have caregivers with disabilities or in situations where there is lack of (extended) family and/or community support, substance abuse issues, challenges for mothers who are minors, inability to access livelihoods or use vocational training skills due to lack of suitable care arrangements for child under 5 and lack of any service provisions specifically targeting children under 5.

In order to respond to some of these concerns, the idea of the ECDC emerged. It was decided that it would primarily seek to support women who for a variety of reasons would be unable to leave the house to earn an income or participate in other activities, as they then would not provide adequate care for their small children. Since the Center includes both refugee and host community children, it promotes peaceful coexistence between the refugee and host communities. One additional aspect in this regard is that it targets not only refugee women, but also local Nepali women (some of which are married to Bhutanese refugee men).

**Location** Sanischare camp

**Time & Duration** January 2012 - present

**Population Groups** Refugees, asylum-seekers and host communities

**Actors** UNHCR, Early Childhood Development Committee, Seto Gurans, Lutheran World Federation (LWF)



## Description

The ECDC was formally opened in Sanischara in January 2012. The ECDC provides day care services for 30 children (11 from the host community and 19 from the refugee community) aged 2 to 5 years, whose mothers/families have specific protection needs. The Center is run by 4 staff members consisting of one Nepali man and one Nepali woman who reside in the host community and two non-refugee women who are married to refugees and living in the camp. These staff members, and 7 refugee volunteers, participated in a 5-day training on early childhood development skills, nutrition, child-friendly tools and pedagogical activities. The 7 refugees who participated in the training have been included in a roster so that they can be engaged as per need.

Due to its location, the Center is easily accessible for both communities.

## Steps to Implementation

The following steps are taken before a child is admitted in the ECDC:

- Review of whether the child fulfills the admission criteria, i.e. 2-5 years with a vulnerable mother (mother with disability, female headed household, minor mother, mother from marginalized group, mother with partner who abuse substances, single mother/mother without extended family and/or community support etc.).
- Recommendation provided to the Management Committee, which has the final say on admission. Their guidelines ensure fairness and transparency in the selection process.

## Constraints

It has been difficult for mothers to feed their children during the daytime in the Center, as they have to go out for work. Although food can be provided by the Center, it is challenging to accommodate for this for several reasons: 1) it is not sustainable in the long term due to decreasing budget allocations, 2) other ECDCs run by the same local NGO face financial resource constraints, and may not even be able to accommodate for similar materials/activities that are available in the UNHCR supported center, 3) it is desirable to maintain the same standards for all centers.

## Impact & Results

- Through the ECDC, 30 vulnerable children from both communities have access to quality care arrangements, and activities ensure their social, emotional, physical and development needs are met.
- The mothers of enrolled children have increased access to livelihoods while their children are well taken care of.
- By collaborating with a local NGO which already runs such centers in the host community, UNHCR responds to a need by making use of existing structures, rather than creating new ones, i.e. utilizing and further reinforcing good practices in the host community.

## Lessons Learned/Keys to Success

- Harmonious relationship and peaceful coexistence between the refugee and host communities is promoted as a result of having the Center respond to the needs of both refugee and host community women.

