

PRESS RELEASE

LEARNING TO PLAY

UNICEF hands over playground equipment to 45 early childhood development centers

BANDA ACEH, 21 MARCH - Lam Cot, Aceh Besar: Slides, swings, merry-go-rounds – these are only a few examples of the colorful playground equipment handed over by UNICEF to the Early Childhood Development (ECD) Center in Lam Cot today. Lam Cot is one of 45 villages in five districts (Aceh Besar, Aceh Jaya, Aceh Timur, Aceh Tamiang and Nias) which will receive playground equipment from UNICEF.

The equipment is part of UNICEF's effort to strengthen early childhood and preschool activities in Aceh and Nias for children under the age of six. A full set of equipment includes a swing, slide, parabolic climber, merry-go-round, Bop up and Down, octagonal climber, climber net and bridge.

Besides providing the equipment, which will help to strengthen children's motor skills and abilities to play with other children - UNICEF's ECD program also consists of strengthening the knowledge and skills of province and district government staff from health, education and other departments; and increasing communities' awareness and parental involvement.

In addition, already 270 ECD cadres have been trained by UNICEF, receiving the skills, knowledge and practice required to work with young children and strengthening their skills associated with their respective developmental stage. The cadre training also includes lessons on providing parental education on ECD within the home environment.

Research has shown that access to ECD services and early learning for young children in this age group will strongly influence their future physical and mental health and social development. Therefore, ECD not only ensures a healthy start into a child's life but also means an investment into the development of the future society.

UNICEF plans to have reached 10700 young children by 2008 with its ECD program and to have parents (mothers, fathers, caregivers) of children, educators and ECD practitioners continuously using practices on ECD and early learning in the communities.

In addition to the 45 villages selected in 2006, ECD activities in 25 villages in 5 other districts (Banda Aceh, Bireun, Aceh Utara, Nagan Raya and Nias Selatan) will be implemented this year.

In order to provide proper and safe places for the activities, UNICEF will upgrade ten semi-permanent schools into community-based ECD centers and in 44 locations is planning to have ECD activities integrated into its posyandu project.

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