INFORMATION FOR PARENTS IN REFUGEE CAMPS OR CROWDED COMMUNITIES DURING COVID-19

Adapting to the difficulties you face in keeping you family safe and well during the spread of Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) can feel challenging. Here are some tips for helping you through.

What might you be experiencing?

- Constant need for updated information related to the COVID-19 situation.
- Feeling overwhelmed, irritable or anxious.
- Feeling unable to concentrate or make decisions, large or small.

Staying healthy and safe

- Teach all family members to **wash their hands** frequently with water and soap, especially before handling food, before and after toilet use or when hands are visibly dirty. This might be hard due to limited supplies, but just try your best. Teach children not to touch their face and to avoid dirty areas.
- **Limit the number of people** leaving or entering the area you are living in. Only allow one person to leave for essential supplies or to seek medical help. If you can, stay as far as possible from anyone not already in your living space.
- If any of you feel unwell **seek medical assistance**.

Looking after your self

- Try to keep **hopeful and positive**
- **Share child-care and other responsibilities** with other adults isolating with you so you all have a break during the day.
- Keep life as close to your **usual routine** as possible.
- Maintain any religious or cultural activities you find comforting.
- If you are feeling angry or stressed, **breathing slowly and deeply** is a good way to relax, particularly if you have no space to yourself to rest and think about your feelings. Breathing slowly and deeply in and then out for 2-3 minutes can really help.

What might your child be experiencing?

- Children may experience ups and downs in their behaviours and emotions. They may alternate between unusually active or aggressive with being quiet and sad.
- Children may express fear, become overwhelmed and display anxiety.

How to help your child?

- **Be affectionate** to reassure and comfort them. Give them hugs or hold hands and tell them you love them.
- Catch them being good! Look for opportunities to **praise your child**. This makes them more likely to do things you like again.
Think of engaging activities to keep children busy. Encourage your child to play. Play is very important in helping children work through stress and worries.

Ask children to think of ways to exercise daily, such as jumping or running in circles, in which they don’t leave their living space.

Spend a few minutes daily giving each child individual attention.

Pay attention to how your child is feeling. Listen to them, acknowledge how hard this time is for them.

Maintain everyday routines, such as bedtimes, as much as you can.

Be cautious of what you discuss in front of them. Give them accurate information but do not overwhelm them.

Try not to engage in negative behaviours such as physically chastising those around you, however frustrated you may feel.

Try, instead, to say the behaviour you want to see, and praise them if they do it.

Older children may be especially struggling with lack of individual space and not being allowed to leave your immediate living space. Praise them for showing maturity and following your instructions. Allow them to take some control of planning, perhaps in deciding on the younger children’s activities or their daily routine.

At the end of each day, ask each child to think of one thing they are grateful for today or a fun thing they did. Praise them for one good thing they did too.