UNIT 32 INVOLVING THE FAMILY AND THE COMMUNITY

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32.1 INTRODUCTION

In all the earlier Blocks, we have been talking of the roles and responsibilities of the caregiver with reference to developing skills of working with children and planning activities for them. Apart from developing a relationship with children, the caregiver has to also give special attention to forming a rapport with other people who are involved in activities of child care. She has to remember that she cannot work alone but needs the support of the parents and other adults in the child care centre and the community. In this Unit, we will discuss why the caregiver needs the support of all these people. You will see how she can work towards this objective and the methods by which she can ensure their support and participation.

Objectives
After studying this Unit, you will be able to:
- explain why the parents and the community should be a part of the child care centre
- suggest different methods through which parents can be motivated to participate in the programme
- make a list of the ways in which the community can help in the activities of the centre
- identify the skills a caregiver will need for interacting with the parents and the community
- enumerate the tasks to be done by the caregiver before she can expect parental or community participation
- discuss the need for the caregiver to relate to other adults in the centre

32.2 RELATING WITH THE FAMILY

Children are linked to their parents and if the parents are not involved in their activities, the efforts of the caregiver at the centre would not be as effective. Not only parents, but other family members who share the responsibility of caregiving, are also important to the centre. The grandparents, who in many situations, participate in looking after the child, should also be involved and made a part of the centre. What do we mean by involving or working the family/parents? Let us first try to answer this question.

By saying that we should involve parents in the activities of the centre, we mean to include both the time and the emotional support of the parents. In other words, whatever time the parents can give, in whichever way they can help to support the activities, would be welcome.
How this can be achieved will depend on the individual needs of the centre. The objectives of the child care services would also determine the kind of activities the caregiver can organize or plan for parent involvement. What the caregiver hopes to achieve with the help of parents will guide her about the activities that can be planned. In Block 2, you read about the varied experience of the child because of different factors. These factors such as the ecological context, the main occupation of the families and their social class will also influence the working of the centre, because these factors dictate the needs of the family and the children. The plans of the caregiver will therefore be influenced by these factors. The kind of support she can expect from the home and community will also be determined, to some extent, by them. Let us take the example of two centres situated in very different areas and catering to different sections of the population to understand this.

A centre situated in a village, where the primary activity of the people is agriculture, has to respond to the specific aspects of the situation. During the periods of harvest and sowing, the children are also required to help in various activities and older preschoolers may not be very regular. The infants and younger preschoolers may also not attend the centre. If the caregiver at the preschool or day care centre tried to organize activities and meetings for parents during this period, she would not get much response from them. The families would be able to respond to her invitation during another time of the year, when they have relatively more time. She will thus have to keep in mind the routines of the family and plan activities accordingly.

In another centre, situated in an urban slum, the families work all days, if they have a job. Otherwise, they are busy in looking for jobs and making ends meet. They do not have much time in the day for the centre and there is no time when all parents are available. In this situation, the caregiver will have to fight a different set of problems. She may never be able to get all the parents to come to the centre. She may need to depend on home visits, talking to parents when they do come to the centre to drop their children or invite individual parents whenever they have the time. Whatever the situation, there are some points which, if kept in mind, will help the caregiver to form a relationship with the family and get its support. She has to:

* develop skills of interaction
* make parents feel a part of the centre and the programme
* provide parents with support and help
* accept and invite any help and criticism that parents offer.

Before we go on further with our discussion, let us think about why does the caregiver need to have the support of the parents? Can you think of some reasons? Write your thoughts in the space provided here before you go on to reading the following paragraphs that describe and discuss the need to establish a link with the parents.

Children spend a good deal of time at home and learn from their experiences. Both the home and the centre are important in their development and should be linked. If the centre is very different from the home, children may have difficulty in adjustment.

In Block 1 Unit 4 you read about the need for child care services. You learnt that these services offer support to parents and one of the objectives of such services is to help them in their task of child care. Any programme can function well and be referred to as a good creche or a centre if this aspect is given due attention. The educator is not the only one working for children and has to cooperate with and consult the parents.

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Invoking the Family and the Community

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If we get to know the parents and understand the family situation, we will learn more about the children. We will be able to help them adjust in the centre and create an environment that will be familiar and comfortable. The children will find continuity in their experiences between the centre and the home and vice versa. Through interaction with the parents, the caregiver will gain in terms of ideas and materials and at the same time learn about the expectations that parents have from the centre. A platform to discuss the programme of the centre will be created and the parents can be informed about the objectives and plans of the programme, and at the same time the opportunity can be used to invite their support.

Let us now go on to the next aspect. How can a link be established with parents? What are the factors that will help the caregiver in involving the family in the activities of the centre? These are as follows:

i) Want the Support of the Family

First and foremost, the caregiver has to believe in the fact that she needs the support of parents. In other words, she must be interested in interacting with them and the other family members. If she is not convinced about this aspect, she will not be able to work with them. This may lead to the parents being dissatisfied and not offering willing support to the caregiver’s plans.

ii) Develop Skills of Interaction

The caregiver needs to develop the ability to interact with the parents in such a way that they feel comfortable. Many of you would have the experience of talking with parents. The exercises in the Practical Manual also provide opportunities to interact with them.

When conversing with parents, one should use a friendly tone. Parents usually like to talk about their children and would welcome an opportunity to talk to another adult who is also concerned about their child. Some of the aspects of personality that we discussed in Unit 11 will help the caregiver while interacting with parents. A caregiver who is both sensitive and cheerful will be generally liked. Her ability to organize activities around the needs of the child will further endear her to the family. A caregiver with such personality traits and attitudes will do good work in the centre and the children will be happy. The parents will develop trust and confidence in the caregiver. Not only will they then be willing to leave their children in her care, but will also be ready to offer every support.

iii) Make Parents Comfortable

The caregiver’s chief responsibility towards the parents is to make them feel welcome at the centre. If they find a warm and an inviting atmosphere, they will feel comfortable. Some parents may feel anxious in a setting which is like a school, while others may be uncomfortable with strangers. In such a situation, the skills of interacting with others will help.

Whenever the parents come to pick up or leave the children, one should specially pay attention to them. These unplanned meetings with parents can be used to further build the relationship. One should be present to welcome the children and have an informal talk with the parents. One can talk to them about the family and gradually get to know them better. Whatever we learn about a family, we should remember to keep it to ourselves. The entry of parents to the centre should not be unduly restricted. They should feel free to observe the activities and interaction of the caregivers and the children. However, this must be suitable for the space available in the centre.

The work that children do in a preschool (drawings, clay models etc.) can be sent home with them from time to time so that the parents know what the children make. The work can also be displayed in the centre so that the parents can see it when they come to drop or pick up the children. Caregivers in the creche can send reports on the child’s activities. Any change they notice in the child or her routine in the centre can be communicated to the parents. What the child eats, for how long she sleeps and so on may be mentioned to them. This will form the basis of a dialogue and help in developing rapport.
Some activities can be planned to which parents are invited. They can be as follows:

- Celebrating festivals
- Planning fairs
- Having some games for parents during the Sports Day

Apart from the above mentioned activities, the caregiver can organize meetings with parents to discuss issues related to children and their activities.

iv) Accept and Invite any Help Parents are able to Offer

Parents can be involved in the activities of the centre in many different ways and at different levels of functioning. One way they can help is to lend a hand in the tasks of the centre. In a particular preschool, the festival of Basant Panchami was being celebrated and children had learnt a song for the festival. On the day of the festival, a few mothers came to the centre and cooked the special yellow rice, while the caregiver dressed up the children in yellow for the programme.

When mothers come to the creche to feed their babies, they can help the caregiver in tasks like putting children to sleep and looking after them while the caregiver cleans the place for the next activity. In a particular centre, one parent, who was a skilled puppeteer, came and organized a puppet show for the children.

However, parents may not always be able to come to the centre and help in the activities. They can then help by offering support and contributing in other ways. You have already read that they can add to the resources. A carpenter can supply small blocks of wood which he can spare easily. Even the sawdust from his shop can be used. A tailor can give small pieces of cloth. Articles like old dresses and broken spectacles which are not needed at home can be used for dramatic play.

In a preschool in a village near Delhi, a fair was being organized and the caregiver was busy preparing toys from low cost material. The toys were to be sold at the fair at cost price. A child's mother and another's grandmother, who were skilled in making toys, helped the caregiver in preparing toys, while another child's parents set up a stall to sell nutritious fruit salad. In this manner, depending on the skills of the parents, the amount of time they can spare and the activities planned in the centre, there are many ways in which parents can help.

A difference in the views of parents and caregiver may cause a problem and a solution that is suitable to both the groups must be worked out. The worker cannot work in the face of parental opposition but has to work cooperatively with them.

v) Cater to Expectations

Earlier in this Unit, we have mentioned that the kind of support parents need or expect would vary with the situation. In some cases, the parents talk about it while in others the caregiver may have to find out what they expect from the centre.

Primarily, most parents would expect good care and safety for their children. Some might wish the centre to teach the child rhymes or songs. Sometimes parents may want to discuss some behaviour of their child. The caregiver will need to be sympathetic and understanding. She may be able to guide the parents or suggest other persons they can consult.

When parents leave their children in the creche, they may expect a specific routine for the child which may be different from the one being followed in the creche. This may give rise to conflicts. A discussion between the caregiver and parents will enable the caregiver to explain her point of view and understand the parents' view.

The caregiver should consider criticism constructively, keeping the children's well being as the focus. Queries of parents should be given due attention. Sometimes there may be criticism because the parents do not understand the objectives of the centre. In this case, the caregiver needs to explain the objectives and goals to the parents. This can be done at an individual level or at a meeting.
You know that some parents expect the preschool to act as a preparatory school and may not look favourably at some experiences planned by the caregiver, such as playing in the sand, playing with clay, finger painting and story telling. They may expect the children to be only taught numbers and the alphabet. The caregiver will need to talk to the parents and explain the value of such activities, the objectives of the programme and how she plans to help in the development of the children. Unless this is done, the parents may reject her approach.

Parents would normally want their children to succeed and progress in the tasks set for them. It thus becomes the responsibility of the caregiver to keep them informed. They would want to know what kind of activities the school is organizing. Providing a feedback to the parents at regular intervals is essential.

### 32.3 METHODS OF REACHING OUT TO PARENTS

The activities which are described and discussed in this Section will help the caregiver to develop a relationship with the parents. Through these activities, parents will get an opportunity to interact with other parents, discuss issues and feel a part of the larger group. They will also be motivated to come to the centre and take part in the activities.

**Meeting Parents:** As we have mentioned earlier, the educator can discuss various issues with parents when they come to drop or pick up children. Visits can be made to the homes of children whenever possible. This does help to form better links but may not be very convenient when the educator lives far away from the centre. When the educator lives in the same locality, home visits which bridge the distance between the centre and the home, should be an essential activity. Apart from using these opportunities, formal meetings can be organized in the centre and parents invited to these. The timing, frequency and duration of the meetings would depend on mutual convenience.

There is a problem about these meetings that all caregivers face. Normally, it is the mothers who will come to these meetings and the fathers will be absent. Caregiving is seen as a responsibility of the mother and the father may not understand why he is needed in the meetings. Also, the attendance in such meetings is initially very low. The caregiver will have to find ways to motivate the fathers to attend the meetings. The reasons for low attendance of parents will also have to be explored. Any success in this area may only be gradual and one will have to be persistent and regular in one’s efforts.

These meetings can be used for generating awareness or for exchange of information on various issues. Talking about individual children may not be possible in such a large group. Therefore, general issues can be discussed. Some of the topics of discussion could be as follows:

- Immunization schedule for children
- Breast feeding
- Nutritious snacks for children
- Developing good eating habits
- Common problems and issues in disciplining
- Toys for children
- Books for children
- Importance of play in learning

If the resources are available, these issues could be discussed by the caregivers with the help of flash cards, films or puppet shows. The caregiver can also invite experts from the community to talk on specific topics. Wherever facilities are available, help can be taken from the resources that exist. For example, if there is a Primary Health Centre or a hospital close to the centre, doctors or nurses can be invited as experts to discuss health issues. The caregiver will have to be there to organize and conduct meetings. In some cases, the parents themselves may have special skills or knowledge that can be shared.
Newsletters: You know that apart from face-to-face interaction, the caregiver can send messages to the parents in different ways—through the children or through the person who brings them to the centre. In some cases, older brothers and sisters or other family members may be doing this task. Messages can be given verbally or in writing. If the resources in the centre permit, the caregiver can also plan a newsletter on a regular basis.

Planning a newsletter which carries all kinds of interesting information to parents would be a good idea in cases where most of the parents are literate. Where the parents cannot read and write, the caregiver can help identify a reader. A newsletter can carry different kinds of information: a new rhyme, an activity children enjoy, ideas for activities for promoting cognitive/social/language/motor skills, list of good books and films for children, suggestions on dental health, immunization, planning a good diet for children, recipes for nutritious snacks and toys for children. The list is long and the caregiver will have to choose the ideas that are relevant to her situation.

Outings and Celebrations: Whenever the centre celebrates festivals or special days, parents can be invited. The caregiver at the centre uses the opportunity to interact with them. Parents enjoy seeing their children perform and, if every child is involved, all parents would be eager to come to the centre. The parents can also be invited to help. Along with giving everybody in the group an opportunity to meet the others, the caregiver will also be able to observe parent-child interactions, learn about the family and gain from the experience of the parents. The parents, at the same time, will also get an opportunity to observe their children in the centre and understand the activities organized for them.

All these methods of reaching parents that we have mentioned in the Section help to form a two-way communication bridge between the centre and the family. As the caregiver learns about the family, the parents also get an insight into the functioning of the centre. This helps to form a link between home and centre for the child.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Read the questions carefully and answer in the space provided.

1) List some of the things which you, as a caregiver, will have to do so that the parents develop confidence and trust in you.

2) What are the various ways through which a caregiver can inform the parents about the activities of their children in the centre? List in the space provided.
3) Your friend who has started working as a caregiver in a child care centre recently, comes to you with a problem. She had planned a parent-teacher meeting with enthusiasm and only a few parents came for the meeting. She does not know how to handle the situation and is feeling depressed. What would be your advice to her?

32.4 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

The caregiver at the centre cannot take on the responsibility to do everything for the children. Parents and the community share the responsibility with her. Therefore, the community should also be a part of the activities at the centre.

Before we go on to discussing the responsibilities of the community and the ways in which it can participate, let us examine the role that the educator has to perform. The first task is to integrate the experiences of children in the community with those at the centre. How can she do this?

First and foremost, she has to know the community. In the community, there are people, material resources and natural resources. The educator has to know the kind of services people in the community can offer, that would benefit the functioning of the centre e.g. transportation, recreation etc. She has to also know what resources exist in the environment e.g. books, films, audio cassettes, and the natural resources like river and pond. Then, she has to structure the experiences in the centre to benefit children. In other words, she has to organize activities in the centre, keeping in mind the environment of the children. This is not difficult to understand if we recall the issues we had discussed in Unit 1 under the head of ‘The Socio-cultural Context of Childhood’. A child who lives in the rural area will have different experiences as compared to a child who lives in the city. Consider the following incident. Chander, an eight year old boy, had come to the city for the first time. He had gone to the market with his elder brother to bring milk and saw milk flow out of the machine, when a coin was put into it. He wanted to know whether there were cows sitting behind the booth. Sudhir, a four year old, on the other hand, had never seen a cow being milked and on being asked, “Where does the milk you drink in the morning come from?” says, “From the bottle”. Thus, the caregiver has to know the different experiences the child may have had in the environment. One has to assess what children are learning outside the centre—the sights they see like shops on way to the school. The things in the environment are a part of the knowledge of children, and should rightly form a basis for the curriculum.
We now come to the next point about how the families can participate. Only if the people are aware of the needs of children, can they help. In other words, the caregiver has to first do her job of awareness generation before she can expect the people to actively help in the programme. To get their cooperation, she has to take the first step.

Fairs and festivals can be planned, to which people living in the surrounding areas can be invited. During these fairs, various issues can be taken up and communicated through plays, puppet shows, songs and rhymes. In one particular primary school of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, this was actually done. Let us read an account of their experience.

The school is situated on the outskirts of Delhi and has children from the age of 3 to 12 years. The teachers of the school were involved in the implementation of a programme of Health, Hygiene and Nutrition in the school. One of the main objectives of the programme was to communicate messages related to these aspects to the community through the children and raise awareness about crucial issues like balanced diet, care of eyes, hygiene and so on. By consensus, it was decided that a ‘Mela’ (fair) would be organized. The responsibilities were divided among the teachers. One teacher took on the responsibility of organizing a puppet show on the care of eyes, another a song on balanced diet. The teachers of the preschool classes made toys from low cost material and set up a stall. A small area was cleaned to demonstrate traffic rules. A giant wheel was brought into the school and slogans related to nutrition were pasted on it. Games were prepared which reinforced messages related to nutrition. For example, a board like the one shown below was made and children had to throw a ball into the mouth of the joker. The balls were covered with paper and labelled ‘carrot’, ‘papaya’ and ‘mango’.

The fair attracted a large crowd and parents and other people from the locality, enjoyed the fair.

Apart from this specific activity, the school also carried out regular activities of taking out processions in the locality, carrying banners with messages related to health, hygiene and nutrition. This managed to attract the attention of the community. Near the school gate, a man from the area used to sell unhygienic snacks. The caregiver established a dialogue with him through the parents. After consistent efforts of the school and community, he improved his hygiene and infected food was no longer served.

Sometimes, the overenthusiasm of the parents may interfere in the regular working of the programme. The caregivers will have to be alert to see that they are not diverted from their objectives. The people in the community can help the centre in very practical ways by helping to get proper drinking water, land area and other such facilities.

Another alternative can be to appoint a few local people in the centre in various capacities. You know from Unit 31 that local persons are a help in community participation as they
understand the customs and practices of the community and are, in turn, easily accepted by the family. These people would perform a very important role in two ways. Firstly, in helping the centre reach the community and use its resources, and secondly, in bringing in new ideas to the centre. This would be a result of their knowledge of both the people in the centre and the community which would help in bringing both close to each other.

One particular organization which has covered many milestones on this path is the Mobile Creches. You have read about it in Unit 29. Let us study the challenges this organization has faced in the area of family and community participation and learn from its experiences.

You know that the Mobile Creches is intended for children from birth to 12 years. Initially, they started with children of construction workers, who were migrants from other states and who worked as unskilled labour. The Mobile Creches also began to provide its services in slum areas and resettlement colonies from 1976. Their comprehensive day care is built around health, nutrition, education and recreation for children.

Along with the regular day care and education activities in the centres, some activities involving the parents and the community are also organized. If children are required at home, they are permitted. Mothers come to the creche to feed their babies at which times informal discussions on infant health are held. Regular monthly and quarterly meetings for mothers are organized. Activities are planned specifically for the community and parents to cater to their needs. As a part of parent/community education, adult education is a regular activity of Mobile Creches. Education regarding health, hygiene, nutrition, family planning, care during illness and special attention to expectant and nursing mothers is given.

In the adult education programme, there were various hurdles in the path. Parents could only attend classes at the end of the day when they were free. This was not an easy task as the parents were tired after the day’s hard work and there were no electric lights. The teachers were given further training to cope with situational problems. The migrants were also helped to deal with contractors, civic authorities, the local school and hospital.

The experience of the Mobile Creches was very different in the slums and resettlement colonies. They found that people were more cynical and the community was much larger than that at a construction site. There were local leaders to contend with. In all, there was greater resistance to the objectives and principles of the programme. To overcome this resistance, the workers started with door-to-door visits, finding occasions for getting parents and other community members together and talking to them. A relationship was developed with the people and a beginning was made in getting their cooperation.

Some activities that are a regular part of the programme of Mobile Creches are mentioned below:

- Camps and educational meetings for mothers. During these meetings, health, hygiene, nutrition, family planning, cutting and sewing garments are discussed. Methods of communication such as puppets and flash cards are used for this. Films are shown and demonstrations for low cost nutritious food items are organized. Sometimes ‘kirtans’ are organized and festivals are celebrated.
- Group activities for children and members of the community are also organized.
- Activities of ‘Ksheetriya Nataki Mandal’ are also a common feature. This group comprises staff members who have an aptitude for the performing arts. They stage plays and sing songs to give messages to the community.
- From the need to reach the community grew the ‘Lok Door’. This group, which is a part of the Mobile Creches, performs in the community at regular intervals with the objective of raising consciousness amongst the people. Issues that are relevant to the situation are picked up. This group was formed in 1974 and gifted field workers participate in its activities. Incidents from the daily work of the creches are picked up and presented in different forms to the community, with the purpose of providing both entertainment and education.
- The Mobile Creches also publishes books for neoliterates and an annual journal for community workers called ‘Ekalavya’.
Apart from these activities, from time to time, efforts are made to do as much as possible for the community. At one particular time, it was felt that the housing conditions of the people living at construction sites could be made better and a model jhuggi was constructed with the material available at the site using the expertise of an architect.

This brief discussion of the activities of Mobile Creches gives us an idea about how activities for parent and community participation can be planned. We also get an overview of the problems in different situations and their solutions.

Towards the end of this Section we would like to say that community participation is not easily won. No one way can be provided to the centre. Each individual caregiver will have to work towards it, learn from the problems she faces and find the solutions while working with the community. It is a process that will yield results only on persistent and continuous efforts.

32.5 ESTABLISHING RAPPORT WITH OTHER ADULTS IN THE CENTRE

Apart from the parents, other family members and the community, there are people in the centre who are also performing a role in child care. While working in the centre as a caregiver, one has to interact with many adults who directly or indirectly offer support in providing care to children. We will have to interact with the person in charge of the centre, the bus driver or the rickshaw puller who brings the children to the centre, the helpers who share work and responsibilities, the sweeper who keeps the centre clean, the gardener and so on. All these people contribute to the efficiency of the centre and help in providing the children a conducive environment and opportunities for development. They are all important in their own way and should be made aware of the activities of the centre and the value of everyone’s help.

To understand this further, let us consider the following examples of how all these people are a part of the activities.

In a small preschool-cum-day care centre situated in a small town of Uttar Pradesh, Ram Avtar, the rickshaw puller, acts as a messenger between the parents and the caregiver at the centre. He is informed about any special activity that is planned by the caregiver and he, in turn, informs the parents. Any specific information or instruction for a child is given to him by parents to be conveyed to the caregiver. For example, if the child did not eat the food given to him for lunch, this is conveyed to the caregiver by the rickshaw puller. Some parents also send written messages through him for the caregiver. Thus, this person plays an important role in bridging the distance between the home and the centre.

In one centre, the caregiver planned an activity where the children were required to go out and collect dry leaves, come back to the room and trace the shapes of the leaves on the paper or make a collage using them. Some children in their enthusiasm started plucking leaves from the plants also. The gardener was angered to see children running about in the garden and plucking leaves from the plants he had lovingly planted. He went with his complaint to the caregiver and she had to pacify him and sort out matters. Such a situation would not have arisen if the activity planned had been discussed with the gardener and he had been informed about it. He could then have helped the caregiver in guiding the children and also helping them identify which plant/tree the leaf belonged to, telling them the names of the plants and so on.

Let us take another example. Suppose the caregiver plans an art activity for children and materials like the paints, brushes and paper have to be arranged. It would be beneficial to tell the helper in the centre well in advance, rather than at the last moment. The helper should not feel rushed while she is busy with several tasks.

To have a good working environment is important for the child care centre. Conflicts between the caregivers will be reflected in the atmosphere of the centre, which is generally sensed very quickly by children. If there is tension, they will feel restless and parents will lose confidence. It is important for the caregivers to be aware of the fact that they are
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looking after children and they have a responsibility towards them. Everybody should be willing to do any work. The caregiver should not shirk jobs, like sweeping the room, when need be.

Before going on to other things, the caregiver has to find out what is expected from her in the centre and plan her work accordingly. She has to also respect the authority of others in their work. The other people in the centre will then respect her authority.

Regular meetings should be used to discuss future plans, specific activities that any caregiver wants to organize and any changes that one is going to make in the routine activities of the centre. Others may have ideas that would help in the plans. If everybody is aware of what others are planning to do, there will be better coordination. From time-to-time, these meetings can also be used to raise awareness and talk about issues related to child care and education. Some problems related to the day-to-day working of the centre can be discussed. Also, on questions related to a specific situation or child, others may be able to offer a solution. They may also be able to offer help in evaluating the programme. You will read more about this in Unit 33. These meetings help to develop a feeling of harmony.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2
Write the answers to the following questions briefly in the space provided.

1) How does the community influence the experiences of children?

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2) Why do we need the support of the community for the child care programme?

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3) Read the following problem carefully and write the solution in the space provided.

Problem

You work in a preschool centre and want to introduce an activity where you will need the help of another educator who is working with a different group of children. What will you do in such a situation?

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Forming a relationship with others involved in the activities of child care is an important task for the caregiver at the centre. She needs the cooperation of these people, be they the adults in the centre, parents or the community. She cannot take on total responsibility for the child. This Unit explains the need for making the experiences of the child in the home and centre continuous and supportive of each other. In this Unit, we attempt to answer the question— "How can the caregiver involve parents and community in the activities of the centre?" The caregiver needs to develop skills of interaction, make the parents feel comfortable, provide them the support they need and accept any desired help they are able to offer. This can be done through various methods, some of which need direct contact between the family and centre and others which do not, such as using newsletters and sending messages. The caregiver has to remember that she has to have a positive attitude towards this task as only consistent and continuous efforts will show any results.

The caregiver’s primary responsibility is to bring about an awareness in the community members and tell them about the goals and objectives of the programme. Some of the ways in which the caregiver can do this are inviting the community members to the centre for celebrations and fairs and involving representatives in the programme at different levels. Working for community and parent participation successfully is not a very easy task and no one solution is there for the problems. Every centre will have to identify the hurdles in the way, and find ways to overcome them. The problems that every centre faces will be different, depending on the needs of the parents they are catering to and their expectations. This work should not stop at trying to get the parents and community to help in the programme but should also enlist their help in planning.

### 32.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

**Check Your Progress Exercise 1**

1) You would need to:

- inform the parents about the objectives and principles of the programme and the activities planned for the children at the centre
- cater to the expectations of the parents
- involve the parents in the activities of the centre by accepting any desired help they give and planning activities for them of their interest
- interact with parents like friends.

2) The caregiver can inform the parents about the activities of their children through various ways. Some of them are:

- displaying the work of children in the centre so that parents get to see it when they come
- talking to them when they come to drop the children
- sending individual written messages through children
- sending newsletters
- giving messages to other people who come to drop the children
- informing them when they come to school for meetings, celebrations etc.
- making home visits if possible
- periodically sending home the work that children do.
Organizing a Child Care Centre

3) In such a case one would need to advise that parent participation is not very easy to achieve and one should not be disheartened by the lack of attendance in the meeting. Their absence does not mean that the parents are not interested in the children but that they may have been unable to attend for reasons like inconvenient timing, not knowing well in advance, not understanding or knowing what was the purpose of the meeting and so on. You would need to tell your friend that she should establish a dialogue with the parents and communicate through other methods also and not just depend on meetings. Before planning a meeting she should

- determine the time convenient to all
- involve parents in planning the meeting
- bring about an awareness about the importance of their support
- inform them about the meeting well in advance.

Lastly, you will need to make the friend understand that any result in this area can only be possible after repeated, consistent, and continuous efforts. She can plan a programme which would benefit the parents and motivate them to come to the centre and use the opportunity to talk to them.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) The community consists of the people, material resources and natural resources and all these three influence the experiences of children as they determine the opportunities that would be available to the children. The community influences the child's development as it contributes to the child's environment.

2) Because the community contributes to the child's experiences and determines to some extent the opportunities available, the caregiver cannot ignore the community. If the community is approached properly and offers help, it can contribute in many practical ways by making available different kinds of facilities to the centre and also offer support to the plans of the caregiver and thus help to achieve much more.

3) Before deciding on the time and day or making any arrangements for the activity, you will have to talk to the person whose help you want and discuss the activity with her. On getting a favourable response, you can together work out the details as to when and how the activity should be carried out. Finally, before any concrete step is taken towards organizing the activity, the supervisor also should be told about the plans and her permission sought for making such changes in the routine of the centre. May be it can also be discussed with other caregivers working in the centre in one of the regular meetings and their ideas and suggestions about such an activity noted.