

Life Skills

Skills for Life

A handbook

Psychosocial Centre



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Life Skills

Skills for Life

A handbook

Life Skills – Skills for Life: A handbook

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support
Blegdamsvej 27
DK-2100 Copenhagen
Denmark
Phone: +45 35 25 92 00
Mail: psychosocial.centre@ifrc.org
Web: www.pscentre.org

Front page photo: Getty Images
Design and production: Paramedia 1662
Printed in Denmark. First edition 2013
ISBN 978-87-92490-11-7

This book has been published by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support (PS Centre).
Editor-in-chief: Nana Wiedemann
Editors and contributors: Wendy Ager, Ea Suzanne Akasha, Semine Brorson and Birgitte Yigen
Peer reviewers: Louise Steen Kryger, Valerie Meredith, Zara Sejbjerg and Manish Tewany
© International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support.

We are grateful to all the organizations who have kindly allowed us to include their materials in *Life Skills – Skills for Life*.
We would also like to thank Danish Red Cross, Finnish Red Cross and Norwegian Red Cross for their funding and support of this publication.



Please contact the PS Centre if you wish to translate or adapt any part of *Life skills – Skills for Life*.
We welcome your comments, feedback and questions at psychosocial.centre@ifrc.org
Please see the full list of materials available from the PS Centre at www.pscentre.org
© International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support.

Foreword

A father recently told us: “We are grateful for the help we got from Red Cross Red Crescent when we had nothing to eat and nowhere to sleep. It helped us through some difficult months. I am also very happy with the life skills my children learned. This they will keep and use for life.”

The International Federation of Red Cross Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is committed in the IFRC 2020 Strategy Saving Lives, Changing Minds to integrating psychosocial support in its responses and programmes, and in its work of ensuring the psychosocial well-being of volunteers. Strengthening life skills contributes to all aspects of psychosocial well-being, in prevention and recovery, in relation to healthy and safe living, and in promoting social inclusion and a culture of non-violence.

The IFRC Reference Centre of Psychosocial Support (PS Centre) is happy to present *Life Skills – Skills for Life*, a publication for practitioners and programmers on psychosocial life skills in humanitarian action. The PS Centre develops strategically important knowledge and promotes best practice to inform and guide psychosocial support initiatives carried out globally by Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies.

Life Skills – Skills for Life features empowering skills that enable people to cope with life and its challenges and changes. Life skills support psychosocial well-being, by promoting good communication, positive thinking, analytical skills and goal setting, cooperation and coping. Strengthening life skills helps individuals and communities to manage challenges and risks, maximize opportunities and solve problems in cooperative, non-violent ways. Ultimately enhancing life skills helps adults, children, families and communities to negotiate challenges in a positive, constructive way.

Life Skills – Skills for Life aims to provide detailed guidance on life skills programming both for those working in the field and those with an interest in psychosocial support. It draws on real life examples from around the world and contains practical tools to help volunteers, staff and programme coordinators to tailor activities to specific target groups. It has been developed to inspire and support life skills programming in different contexts. There are resources for work both in community-based development and disaster interventions. We sincerely hope that *Life Skills – Skills for Life* will help ensure better interventions and programmes to benefit those we wish to support.

Nana Wiedemann

Head of IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support

The Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement

Humanity

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

Impartiality

It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

Neutrality

In order to continue to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

Independence

The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

Voluntary service

It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

Unity

There can be only one Red Cross or one Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

Universality

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all Societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.

Table of contents

Introduction	9
1 Understanding life skills	15
2 Life skills in the field	31
3 Life skills needs assessments	45
4 Planning life skills programmes	61
5 Implementing life skills programmes	77
6 Monitoring and evaluating life skills programmes	93
Resources & Glossary	109

Textboxes in this publication are divided into the following categories:



Explanations



Cases



Checklist



Advice/Best practice

Introduction



Life skills in psychosocial support

This introduction gives an overview of 'Life Skills – Skills for Life', defining key concepts and describing how life skills are integral to interventions undertaken by the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement. It includes a summary of each chapter of this book and lists useful resources for life skills programming.

What are life skills?

Life skills are a group of empowering skills that enable people to cope with life and its challenges and changes. Life skills support psychosocial well-being, promoting good communication, positive thinking, analytical skills and goal setting, cooperation and coping. Strengthening life skills helps individuals and communities to manage challenges and risks, maximize opportunities and solve problems in co-operative, non-violent ways.

Education, health, youth and community development sectors all use the term 'life skills' to describe a range of different skills and approaches. Psychosocial life skills can be promoted in sports or youth clubs, support groups, volunteer and community work. Ultimately enhancing life skills helps adults, children, families and communities to negotiate challenges in a positive, constructive way.

Psychosocial

The term 'psychosocial' refers to the dynamic relationship between the psychological dimension of a person and the social dimension of a person. The psychological dimension includes the internal, emotional and thought processes, feelings and reactions, and the social dimension includes relationships, family and community network, social values and cultural practices. 'Psychosocial support' refers to the actions that address both psychological and social needs of individuals, families and communities.



Life skills and the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement

Psychosocial life skills are relevant to all the work carried out within the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement. Programmes such as *Youth as Agents for Behavioural Change*, and *Sexual, Reproductive Health and Life Skills for Youth Peer Education* include life skill components. Life skills are at the core of other Red Cross Red Crescent programmes too, such as *The Children's Resilience Programme: Psychosocial support in and out of schools* and the *RespectED: Violence and Abuse Prevention* programmes from Canadian Red Cross.



Saving lives, changing minds

Life skills programmes and activities are an integral part of meeting the International Federation of Red Cross Red Crescent Societies' 2020 Strategy "Saving Lives, Changing Minds." In meeting these strategic aims, life skills programmes offered to affected populations include the following elements:

Strategic Aim 1: Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disasters and crises

This includes analysing situations; thinking critically and weighing pros and cons; planning how to solve problems and knowing how to make decisions in ways that are positive and appropriate to the situation; evaluating future consequences of actions taken; creating a sense of meaning in life; knowing how to find relevant information; advocating for needs and rights; coping with feelings and needs; managing stress; coping with changes and challenges; communication skills such as active listening and psychological first aid skills; reinforcing a sense of belonging to a community and practising cultural activities and traditions.

Strategic Aim 2: Enable healthy and safe living

This includes knowing how to protect yourself and the people in your care; analysing situations, thinking critically and weighing pros and cons; evaluating future consequences of actions taken; creating meaning; making safe and healthy choices; managing fear of the future; strengthening self-awareness and self-efficacy; advocating for needs and rights.

Strategic Aim 3: Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace

Using culturally appropriate coping mechanisms; analysing situations; thinking critically and weighing pros and cons; advocating for rights; communicating effectively; solving conflicts peacefully; cooperating and negotiating; coping with feelings and needs; improving emotional well-being by knowing how to feel safe; building trust in others; learning to empathize; managing stress; understanding and respecting differences.

Volunteers have a major part to play in achieving the aims of Strategy 2020. Strengthening their life skills too will give them the knowledge and tools to do their work on behalf of the Movement.



The quality of the response offered before, during or after crisis events is as important as the activities themselves. Staff and volunteer preparation and training is therefore crucial in delivering better services. Psychosocial life skills training helps volunteers to communicate well with beneficiaries. They can offer support to affected communities with integrity and understanding.

Psychological first aid

PFA is caring support offered to people who have experienced a very distressing event or situation. Basic elements include: staying close, listening attentively, accepting feelings, and providing general care and practical help. A training module on PFA is in the *Community-based Psychosocial Support – A training kit*, available on the IFRC PS Centre's website.

The benefits of life skills

Strengthening psychosocial life skills impacts life in multiple ways. Life skills learned and applied in one context such as a self-help group, for example, can generalize across other domains of life. Learning assertive communication, for example, within the safety of a self-help group has the potential for changing relationships at home and at work, between family members, amongst colleagues, with peers. Very often Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers who learn active listening also report they have become better listeners in their daily lives.



The power of listening

A young doctor who worked as a volunteer in the Movement said, “When I volunteered in a psychosocial support programme in an area affected by floods, I was still a medical student. The most valuable thing I learned was the power of listening. I saw how in respecting others by listening to them, we get their respect in return. I learned to accept feelings in such tense and horrible moments. I am a better doctor now because of my time in the psychosocial support team.”

#

Alex Rutherford/British Red Cross



13

Life skills help individuals respond to changes and transitions in the course of their lives and to manage difficulties and crisis events when they occur. Strengthening life skills enables people to cope and recover after accidents, violence, incidents of suicide, natural and man-made disasters or during armed conflict, war or epidemics. Life skills programmes can support coping and enable people to move on with their lives.

Life skills – Skills for life

Life Skills – Skills for Life aims to provide detailed guidance on life skills programming both for those working in the field and those with an interest in psychosocial support. It draws on real life examples from around the world and contains practical tools to help volunteers, staff and programme coordinators to tailor activities to specific target groups.

This book has been developed to inspire and support life skills programming in different contexts. There are resources in it for work both in community-based development and disaster interventions. *Life Skills – Skills for Life* has useful guidance for planning and developing support groups or conducting workshops, for example. There is a framework for monitoring and evaluating life skills programmes too, with detailed examples of indicators and measures appropriate to life skills activities.

Staff, volunteers and community members involved in developmental and emergency settings will find the book useful for smaller-scale and larger-scale programmes, like a support group for bereaved people after a suicide in the family, for example, or when seeking ideas for a parenting programme for single-headed households.

Life Skills – Skills for Life defines and describes life skills and explains how they are relevant to psychosocial well-being and resilience. Life skills programming is grounded in core principles of ‘do no harm’ and the protection of the human rights of women, girls, boys and men affected by crisis events. It includes guidance about carrying out needs assessments and how to plan and design activities and programmes. The final chapter covers monitoring and evaluation processes and procedures.

The book is divided into six chapters. It can be used in its entirety or as reference point for specific aspects of life skills programming:

Chapter 1 | Understanding life skills

Understanding life skills explains how life skills support behavioural change, psychosocial well-being and resilience before, during and after crisis events. It describes and defines the concept of psychosocial life skills, giving examples of the three main categories. It looks at protective factors and how life skills can assist the recovery process after a crisis event and mass trauma.

Chapter 2 | Life skills in the field

Life skills in the field looks at examples of life skills activities and programmes from around the world. Examples are drawn from psychosocial support and education programmes, as well as from prevention, emergency response, recovery and development settings. Tailoring programmes is crucial in supporting people's recovery, taking account of age, gender, health, etc. and in relation to needs and capabilities.

Chapter 3 | Life skills needs assessments

Life skills needs assessments describes why needs assessments are important and gives information on how to plan and conduct a needs assessment relevant for a life skills intervention. Different types of assessments are described and sample questions are provided for different target groups. Examples from the field are used throughout the chapter.

Psychosocial assessment methods are extensively covered by *Psychosocial Interventions: A handbook*, published by the IFRC PS Centre. Please refer to this handbook for in-depth information about psychosocial assessments.

Chapter 4 | Planning life skills programmes

Planning life skills programmes follows on from needs assessment and gives detailed guidance on setting achievable goals and objectives together with appropriate indicators. It describes the different kinds of programming approaches and activities that can be used for life skills programmes. There are a number of examples from the field, including an example of a log frame for a youth programme integrating life skills with livelihood support. The chapter ends with a checklist for programme planners.

Chapter 5 | Implementing life skills programmes

Implementing life skills programmes describes how to conduct life skills programmes and activities, following on from the previous chapter on planning programmes. Skills and methods in facilitation are detailed and the role of facilitators in creating a participatory learning environment is explained. Examples taken from Red Cross Red Crescent programmes illustrate the chapter and ideas for structuring sessions are provided.

Chapter 6 | Monitoring and evaluating life skills programmes

Monitoring and evaluating life skills programmes describes the way that facilitators and coordinators can document progress and development and ensure that programmes are fulfilling objectives. The chapter looks first at how monitoring is done and details documenting inputs, outputs and outcomes. Various methods and tools are given and examples provided from the field. The section on evaluation explains how activities can be evaluated at the midpoint and at the end of the programme. Guidance on evaluating how to assess whether the programme has had the desired impact is provided.

A framework for monitoring and evaluation summarises the chapter.

Understanding life skills



Understanding life skills

Understanding life skills explains how life skills support behavioural change, psychosocial well-being and resilience before, during and after crisis events. It describes and defines the concept of psychosocial life skills, giving examples of the three main categories. It looks at protective factors and how life skills can assist the recovery process after a crisis event and mass trauma.

Life skills

Life skills are psychosocial skills and abilities that make it is easier to meet life's challenges and crisis events in a realistic, positive and constructive way. Life skills encouraging well-being may be directed towards oneself and others, and in relation to actions in changing the environment.

Life skills

Life skills are psychosocial competencies and abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. Life skills are vital to psychosocial recovery after a crisis event and are closely linked to the concepts of behavioural change, psychosocial well-being and resilience.

The term 'life skills' encompasses a broad range of abilities, competencies and approaches. It is used widely in the education, health, social and humanitarian sectors and usually describes a set of empowering cognitive, personal and interpersonal skills. Life skills help individuals and communities make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, empathize with others, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, and cope with and manage life in a productive manner. These skills are essentially the abilities that promote mental and social well-being in situations encountered in the course of life.

Life skills help to reinforce a person's sense of self as an individual member of a household, community and society. The stressors of a crisis event can disrupt the community and undermine an individual's ability to handle situations. This can sometimes unfortunately result in psychological distress. However, when life skills are strong, individuals can understand and handle their reactions to abnormal situations and access capacities in supporting their recovery.



Iida Lund/Danish Red Cross Youth



In the case study below, Red Cross volunteers in Haiti use cognitive, personal and interpersonal life skills to help a young man recover and rebuild his life after the earthquake. This case study shows how a crisis event like the Haiti earthquake can cause great disruption to individuals and communities:

Crisis

Crisis can be defined as any sudden interruption of the normal course of events in the life of an individual or group or population that makes re-evaluation of modes of action or thought necessary. A crisis will bring about a sense of loss of the normal foundations of day-to-day activities.



Thomas Bertelsen/Danish Red Cross Youth



Life skills help coping in disasters

Some weeks after the 2010 Haiti earthquake, a group of psychosocial support volunteers from Haiti Red Cross Society visited one of the camps where thousands of people had set up temporary shelters. A father approached the team and asked for help for his son. The family was extremely concerned the young man was slipping into madness. He either ran about manically or sat passively in a corner. He hadn't slept for weeks and he was also experiencing flashbacks. His father explained that his son had helped dig out dead bodies in the first few days of the disaster. The volunteers began by using psychological first aid and listened to what the young man had experienced in the frantic days after the earthquake. They explained to him and his family that he was experiencing normal reactions to disasters. This gave the family tremendous relief in understanding the situation more fully. They also taught the young man some techniques to stop the flashbacks, so that he could sleep and begin to recover. The volunteers followed up with the young man after their initial contact and invited him to join some social activities which had been organized in the camp to support psychosocial recovery.

Most life skills are wide-ranging skills that can be used in many different contexts. For example, interpersonal skills such as negotiation skills can be used in resolving a conflict with a family member or a friend. They can also be used in discussing community issues at a local meeting or in debating terms of employment during a job interview. Learning practical skills too supports individuals in their daily lives. Learning vocational skills, for example, can help people cope with changes in their circumstances by giving them new employment opportunities.

Life skills can also have broader impacts than simply learning the skill itself. Learning to manage a budget can be a challenge for young people, for example, when they first leave home. If they struggle to make ends meet, they run the risk not only of financial hardship, but also of losing confidence more generally and of finding themselves suffering from low self-esteem. Deciding to change and to invest time in learning to manage a budget, however, can build competence and boost self-worth. In the process of succeeding in budgeting, young people therefore gain psychosocial benefits too.

Life skills in a world of change

The challenges people face around the world have changed significantly during the last few decades. Climate change, endemic diseases, widespread use of drugs, political instability and war, human trafficking, economic uncertainty, etc. impact individuals and communities across the globe. Humanitarian response in these challenging times recognizes that strengthening life skills is an integral part in the process of positive change in individuals and communities after crisis events and in post-disaster and post-conflict settings.

This means more than handing out information to those affected by a crisis event. Life skills programmes enable people to translate knowledge, attitudes and values into action. Activities support participants in making healthy life choices, resisting negative pressures and thereby minimizing harmful behaviours.

In crisis situations, for example, vocational skills programmes are often implemented for single-headed households. However, outcomes are improved if life skills are integrated into the programme. Strengthening life skills is found to support people in implementing their newly acquired vocational skills. The following case study shows an example of integrated vocational training and psychosocial life skills activities.



Added value

After the 2011 earthquake in Van, the Turkish Red Crescent, in collaboration with public authorities, set up vocational courses for women in tented camps. A needlework course was organized with a number of aims: to develop new vocational skills, to spend time in a productive way, to contribute to their families' income by selling handicrafts, and to cope with the psychological effects of the earthquake. The needlework course provided an environment for the women to socialize, share their troubles, and get information about psychosocial support activities and about the distribution of items in the camp. The course also included seminars about women's rights, health, hygiene, childcare, etc. At the end of the needlework courses, a bazaar was organized for the women to sell their handicrafts.

Cognitive, personal and interpersonal skills

Life skills can be grouped into three main categories: cognitive, personal and interpersonal. All three groups of skills can help individuals cope with life and its changes. These categories are interrelated and influence one another. Feelings will influence how a person thinks, and how they think will also influence how they feel or act. A person can choose to manage feelings by altering the way they think about themselves, about others or the environment. Interpersonal skills are also influenced by how individuals think, and vice versa.

In the case study below, the group sees how active listening helps two men to communicate more effectively. In learning to listen, the men are able to empathize with one another and then resolve their conflict peacefully. This example of interpersonal life skills training shows how it is possible to lay a foundation for establishing and rebuilding healthy relationships and safer communities.



Active listening

A group was participating in a dialogue session in Zimbabwe, a country marked by suffering following the violent 2008 elections. Two men were shouting at each other. The women, many of them with children on their backs, fell silent. “We only know how to fight. It’s the only language we know,” whispered a participant.

For a moment the volunteers watched what was happening. Then one of them stepped in, holding a stick in his hand. He looked at the two men, handed one of them the stick and explained: “This is a talking stick.” The men looked confused. They were still on the verge of hitting each other. “Whoever holds the talking stick gets to speak. When he is finished,” the volunteer pointed at the other man, “you then take the stick and repeat what you just heard. If he agrees, you can hand the stick back. If not, you have to listen once more till you can repeat exactly what he said. Afterwards you get the talking stick.”

One of the men started talking, this time quietly and calmly. The atmosphere changed and by the end of the conversation, the two men shook hands, smiling at each other and at the volunteers. “We had forgotten how to listen,” said one of them. “With the violence after the elections, we have learned to fight, not listen.” The other man said, “This exercise taught me how to listen actively. I have learned how to communicate effectively and I felt heard. This might help us try to understand each other.”



Cognitive skills

Cognitive skills and knowledge enable individuals and groups to:

- use culturally appropriate coping mechanisms
- analyse a situation, think critically and weigh pros and cons
- plan how to solve problems and know how to make decisions in ways that are positive and appropriate to the situation
- evaluate future consequences of the actions of themselves and others
- create a sense of meaning in their everyday life, in the world, etc.
- know how to find relevant information
- use vocational skills
- advocate for rights for themselves and others.

Coping

Coping is the process of adapting to a new life situation – managing difficult circumstances, making an effort to solve problems or seeking to minimize, reduce or tolerate stress or conflict. Healthy coping behaviour and mechanisms include reaching out to others for help, actively working to find a solution or altering or adapting to the source of stress. Unhealthy coping behaviour includes ignoring a threat or denying its effect, going into isolation, letting frustration out on others, substance abuse and taking other security and health risks.



Personal skills

Personal skills and knowledge enable individuals and groups to:

- be self-aware, i.e. know personal weaknesses, strengths and values
- be confident and have self-worth
- cope with feelings and needs
- be able to empathize
- manage stress
- cope with changes and challenges
- improve emotional well-being by knowing how to feel safe and develop trust in others
- set realistic goals for the future
- be able to create a sense of meaning.

Interpersonal skills

Interpersonal skills and knowledge enable individuals and groups to:

- build trust in others
- relate and build attachments to others, i.e. caregivers, family and friends, peers
- care for the well-being of others
- communicate effectively and avoid misunderstandings that leads to conflicts
- cooperate and negotiate
- solve conflicts peacefully
- listen and communicate assertively
- feel a sense of belonging to a community
- practise cultural activities and traditions
- participate in appropriate household responsibilities and livelihood support.

This grouping of life skills corresponds broadly to the three domains of skills and knowledge, emotional well-being and social well-being in the *Inter-Agency Guide to the Evaluation of Psychosocial Programming in Humanitarian Crises, 2011*.

Life skills during and after crisis events

During and after crisis events, it is common to experience a wide range of reactions and difficulties. These include grief, pain, depression, hopelessness, fear, anxiety, worry and guilt. Reactions may be directed towards other people in the form of suspicion, moodiness, anger and conflict. Risky behaviours may develop – like substance abuse, along with other difficulties in concentration, or in feeling detached – that make living a great challenge. At these times, people find it hard to make decisions and plan. Feelings of loss of control, personal capacity and direction in life are often mentioned as some of the very damaging consequences of a natural or manmade disaster.

Psychosocial life skills help people regain abilities and build new competencies, even in very challenging circumstances. This promotes resilience, making it easier to adapt to changed living conditions. Strengthening life skills in focused ways can build up capacity to cope after a crisis event. In the example below from Australia, people talk about tapping into skills they had before, as well as learning new skills. In the process of recovery, the community then finds itself stronger and is more aware of its collective resources.

The kind of life skills programmes or activities offered during or after a crisis event will depend upon the issues raised in the specific situation being faced by the affected population or group. Life skills aiming at behavioural change, for example, will often be applied in settings where there are health risks and new healthy practices need to be adopted by the community as a whole. This will be the case after a flood, where it is paramount to

learn to handle water in safe ways to avoid waterborne diseases. Saying no to unsafe sex and using condoms for protection are also examples of encouraging healthy life choices. Behavioural change could also be necessary in a post-conflict setting, where living peacefully together once again requires collective learning in managing feelings, in negotiation and in conflict resolution. In most settings it can be assumed that life skills in coping with loss and promoting hope and social cohesion will benefit everyone.



Enhanced personal capacity after the bush fires

After the 2009 Australian bush fires, the Australian Red Cross reported on psychosocial recovery in the disaster area. A community member said: “You can be a victim of the event and still be a functioning contributor at the same time.” People talked about being able to tap into existing skills in order to accomplish what was needed. Some spoke of having discovered new skills in public speaking and community advocacy, for example, and reflected on how this had boosted what they were able to achieve at this difficult time. There was a strong view that being in control of and being able to actively contribute to community recovery was empowering and therapeutic.



22

Canadian Red Cross

Life skills and rights

It is important that life skills programmes and activities reflect the specific cultural setting in which they are implemented. Programmes must therefore draw on existing skills, knowledge and experience in the affected community and then build on these resources. It is crucial to include the protection of human rights in all life skills programmes and to apply human rights principles in planning activities.

Specific groups have particular protection needs, including unaccompanied minors, persons with disabilities, older people, those living in institutions, survivors of gender-based violence and human trafficking. When working with internally displaced persons (IDPs) or other displaced groups especially, it is important to bear in mind that the risk of human rights violations increases, the longer a group or population is displaced.

Every country in the world is now party to at least one human rights treaty that addresses health-related rights. This includes the right to health and well-being, as well as rights that have to be fulfilled for health and well-being to be present:

- Article 25 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)* states that, “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family.”
- *The Preamble to the World Health Organization’s Constitution (1946)* declares that it is one of the fundamental rights of every human being to enjoy “the highest attainable standard of health.”

Knowing and advocating for one’s human rights and protection is fundamental to psychosocial well-being. The capacity to feel empathy and engage in healthy social relationships,

to be able to control emotions, stress and conflicts, to be critical, analytical and assertive, as well as a good planner and decision-maker, will most likely help people achieve the healthiest possible living standards. All these (and more) are life skills which build psychosocial well-being:

- According to the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)*, all children have the inherent right to life, and their survival and development are to be ensured. Article 29 also underlines that children's education must aim at the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.

The ability to analyse a situation, negotiate and make the right choices, for example going to school instead of engaging in full time labour, will almost always help a child develop in the best possible way. Yet, education based on learning by rote will not necessarily develop a child's personality, talents and abilities to their fullest potential. This also requires assertiveness, analytical skills, problem solving, good communication skills, empathy, self-esteem and many other life skills.

Human rights principles and protection issues are integrated into *The Children's Resilience Programme* that is being implemented in many countries by the Red Cross Red Crescent and Save the Children. Children learn and practise life skills in 20 facilitated sessions, covering such topics as children's rights, how to communicate and solve conflicts, and protecting ourselves from violence. Parents participate in four sessions, including psychosocial well-being and children's rights and responsibilities, and protecting children from harm.

Life skills and psychosocial well-being

Psychosocial well-being is defined as a positive state of being, when an individual thrives. Both the psychological and social dimensions of well-being in this definition are equally important. In times of adversity, it is crucial to take account of both dimensions.



Take as an example the impact of a bomb blast on a group of injured school children. Even though the children may need immediate medical treatment, their emotional and social needs are equally important. They need to know that the situation is now safe and they need to be given accurate information about the blast. They need to be reassured that their reactions are normal reactions to an abnormal situation. If their psychosocial needs are not met, they may be worried about going back to school. They may have concentration difficulties or sleeping problems, and develop anxiety or other symptoms of psychosocial distress in the long run. Life skills in this situation can help children and their families increase awareness of psychosocial reactions after a crisis event and help them to make informed decisions based on emotional needs.

Life skills are a component of many psychosocial programmes, as supporting social well-being involves strengthening the capacity to deal with social situations. This might involve equipping children with skills to cope assertively with conflicts with peers, for example, or enabling youth to participate in local decision-making, or helping caregivers with skills to practise positive discipline with children. Similarly, supporting emotional well-being may involve the development of skills through sharing knowledge and information and reflecting on past difficult experiences, or helping people to begin to imagine a future of hope for themselves.

Besties show the way

Young adolescents who shy away from the limelight participate in *No Limits*, a Red Cross programme in New Zealand. Withdrawn, bullied, socially isolated or in need of support due to their family situation, they take part in the programme to regain their self-confidence and acquire life skills. They learn to solve problems, make decisions, communicate, plan and they also learn to work in teams. The programme combines a mix of outdoor activities and educational modules.

'Besties' is the name for the youth leaders who facilitate the course. The besties are role models for the adolescents. "The only limit is yourselves," is their attitude. *No Limits* has a lasting impact on the young participants who learn that they are capable of a lot more than they thought.



New Zealand Red Cross

Life skills and resilience

Resilience is the ability to respond and adapt effectively to changing circumstances. IFRC describes resilience as:

"the ability of individuals, communities, organizations, or countries exposed to disasters and crises and underlying vulnerabilities to

- anticipate
- reduce the impact of
- cope with
- and recover from

the effects of adversity without compromising their long term prospects."

Resilience frameworks always recognize and value the resources and capacities of individuals and communities. Strengthening resilience typically involves strengthening these resources and capacities. In this way, life skills are crucial to enable people to 'bounce back' and cope with challenges and difficulties, and to restore and maintain a new balance. A community, for example, mobilizing its assets and resources can bounce back from the impact of a crisis, such as a natural disaster due to climate change. Being more resilient it will adapt better to future changes, being able to self-organize, to act and learn from previous experience.

Resilience

Resilience increases the capacity to adapt. Strengthening life skills builds psychosocial adaptive capacity, helping overcome short and long-term vulnerabilities. At the individual level, resilience is about 'bouncing back' and maintaining a quality of life, despite different setbacks.

Resilience is enhanced with life skills, and in general resilience is strengthened when individuals can:

- connect well with others
- communicate effectively
- plan and solve problems
- manage strong feelings and impulses
- foster a positive self-image and self-confidence.

Building resilience through life skills

American Red Cross have developed the following series of messages about resilience and psychosocial well-being for people affected by crisis events:

- Good relationships with family members and friends are important. Accepting help from those who care about you and who will listen to you strengthens resilience. Assisting others can also help.
- You cannot change the fact that highly stressful events happen, but you can change how you interpret and respond to these events. Try looking beyond the present to how future circumstances may be a little better.
- Accept that change is a part of living. Accepting circumstances that cannot be changed can help you focus on circumstances that you can alter.
- Develop realistic goals. Instead of focusing on tasks that seem unachievable, ask yourself, "What can I do today that helps me move in the direction I want to go?"
- Manage strong feelings so they do not negatively impact your relationships with others.
- Developing confidence in your ability to solve problems helps build resilience.
- Take decisive actions, rather than detaching completely from problems and wishing they would just go away. People often learn something about themselves in adverse situations; many find that they have grown stronger as a result of their struggle.
- Avoid blowing the event out of proportion. Even when facing very painful events, try to consider the stressful situation in a broader context and keep a long-term perspective.
- An optimistic and positive outlook enables you to expect that good things will happen.

Take care of yourself. Engage in activities that you enjoy. Exercise regularly. Some people write about their thoughts and feelings. Meditation and spiritual practices help some people restore hope.

Coping in Today's World: Psychological First Aid and Resilience for Families, Friends and Neighbors.
American Red Cross, 2010.

Across the world, National Societies run support groups for people affected by crisis events. These groups aim to build resilience so that participants can move on with life. In the support groups, participants talk about and share their reactions to the crisis event. They acquire cognitive life skills through getting information relevant to their situation. Gradually they build or rebuild psychosocial life skills so as to move on in a more robust way.

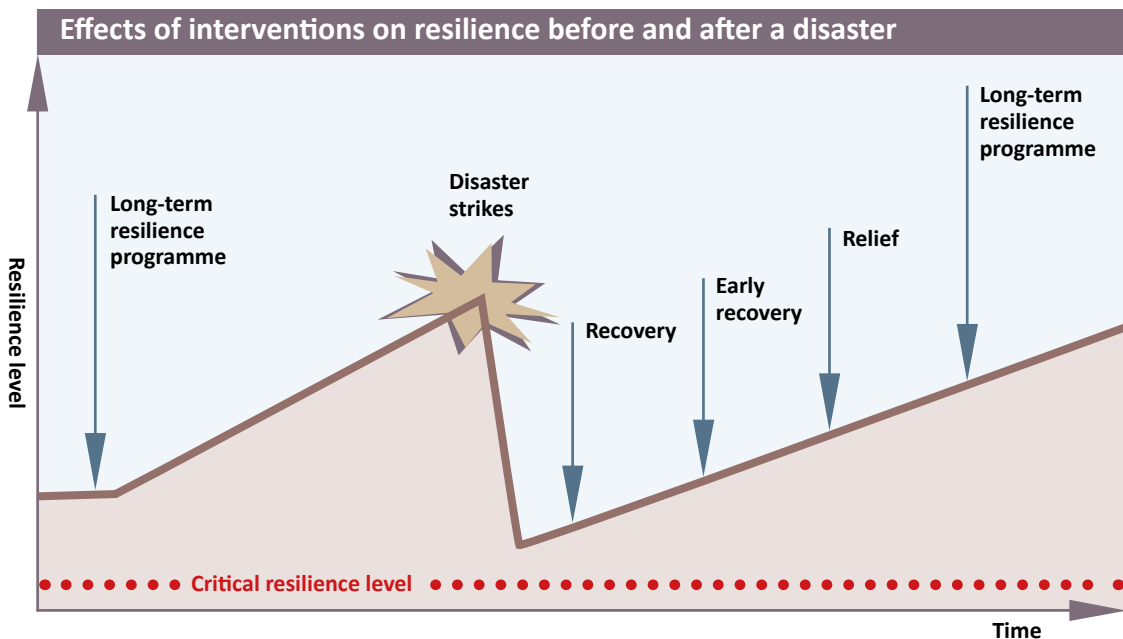
Moving on after the loss

Swedish Red Cross runs groups for young people who have experienced a suicide in the family. The focus is to promote resilience by building participants' coping skills and to promote a sense of connectedness. The groups meet once a week to talk about how they are doing. A young participant said, "It is always very touching to listen to the stories and hear how sad we all are. But I have also learned a lot about what you can do to move on, and how you can tackle grief and sorrow in a way that helps you connect to others and to feel close to others." In learning to handle their emotions, the young people are building their resilience, helping them go on with their lives with more strength than before.

Resilience after crisis events

The diagram below represents the impact of a crisis event on resilience and the points at which interventions can make a difference to people's lives. The vertical line 'resilience level' shows the level of resilience in a community at any given time. The horizontal line 'time' represents the period of time over which events are taking place. According to the diagram, the resilience level rises as interventions take place and falls when a disaster or crisis hits.

The red dotted line, 'critical resilience level,' indicates what level of resilience is needed in the community to bounce back after the disaster or crisis. If the level of resilience falls below this level, the community may not be able to use its assets and resources. If the



Adaption from International Federation. The road to resilience. Bridging relief and development for a more sustainable future. Geneva, 2012.

community is able to bounce back, to learn and grow through adversity, they will be able to cope even better than before. Others will bounce back and resume their lives broadly as before. However, some people may not recover fully and may fare worse than they did before the crisis event. For a small percentage, the disaster or crisis event will lead to serious difficulties, and therefore they will fall below the critical resilience level.

Resilience can be strengthened at different points over time, as shown on the brown line; long-term resilience programmes, for example, can be implemented before and after disasters. Although it is important to plan and implement activities during and after disasters or crisis events, it is of particular value to anticipate crisis and build resilience through disaster preparedness. Determining what activities should happen at what point will depend on the needs of the affected, taking exposure to the crisis, vulnerabilities, resources and capacities into consideration.

Implementing life skills activities in all the different phases of a crisis event will support the resilience level of a population. This also includes strengthening life skills during disaster preparedness activities to boost resilience in vulnerable groups for potential future emergencies.

Referrals

Everyone will be affected to some degree by a crisis event and many people will need help from family, friends and the local community to recover and adapt to a changed situation. Depending on the severity of the crisis event, some people may need assistance to recover what they have lost and build new competencies, resilience and coping mechanisms.

A small percentage will need professional help, perhaps because of pre-existing mental health problems. Persons with slight and moderate mental health problems can usually be included in most life skills interventions. For people with severe mental health problems, life skills training may be beneficial, but specialized help should also be offered, if at all possible.

Individuals may need referral if they:

- hint at or talk openly of suicide
- suffer from pre-existing psychological or mental health disorders
- experience strong reactions over an extended period after the crisis event
- pose a risk to themselves or other people
- have psychosomatic symptoms that continue over an extended period of time
- find that their safety is threatened by violence and abuse. In some cases, professional help from legal aid organizations, crisis centres, refuges, etc. may be needed.



When to refer

Where psychosocial problems are severe or persist over an extended period (usually of over one to two months), referral to appropriate professional help is recommended.

Protective factors

Protective factors give people psychological cover, reducing the likelihood of severe consequences of hardship or suffering. The collective level of resilience in a population is enhanced by a number of protective factors in individuals, families and the community. For example, belonging to a caring family and community, maintaining traditions and cultures, having a strong religious belief or political ideology giving a feeling of being part

of something bigger than oneself are all protective. Children are protected, when their family is caring and when they have social support within and outside the family. The case study below shows how life skills activities can strengthen protective factors. In this example, the protection for young people in having good social support was actively promoted in the specific activities that were organized.



Social support as a protective factor

Providing activities where adolescents can spend time with one another helps nourish and strengthen existing relationships and establish new friendships. Spending time with peers builds interpersonal skills, support networks and social cohesion. A study of a

psychosocial support programme (featuring psycho-education and skill building for Bosnian young people affected by the war in the former Yugoslavia) showed that cognitive and interpersonal support-seeking skills were very much appreciated by the participants. They identified these support-seeking skills as one of the most valuable elements. Young people learned about different types of social support, such as emotional closeness, social connection, the feeling of being needed and how to identify and recruit sources of support.



Recovery after mass trauma

Mass trauma is the term used to describe multiple injuries, deaths, disability and emotional stress caused by a large-scale catastrophic event. Research has identified five essential elements in interventions following disaster or mass trauma. The emphasis here is on recovery and resilience and encouraging empowerment and efficacy.

The five elements are applicable from onset to the mid-term recovery stage of a mass trauma. They include promoting:

1. a sense of safety
2. calming
3. a sense of self- and community efficacy
4. connectedness
5. hope.

After Hobfoll, Stevan et al. 'The road to resilience. Five Elements of Immediate and Mid-Term Mass Trauma Interventions' in *Psychiatry*, vol. 70, pp. 283-315, 2007.

1. Promoting a sense of safety

After a traumatic event, it is common to develop a view that the world in general is no longer a safe place and never will be again.

Strengthening personal and interpersonal life skills, such as empathy and cooperation, will help promote a sense of safety and restore a belief of the world as a safe place again. The development of cognitive life skills, such as positive thinking, restoring hope, and the ability to avoid conflict, are important too in this process. Providing information and knowledge about where to go for information and protection can also help.

2. Promoting calming

A traumatic event will almost always result in increased emotionality, heightened awareness and anxiety. It is common for people to have emotional outbursts, to feel numb and to have difficulty in sleeping.

Life skills that promote calming are essential to regain emotional stability. Personal skills such as the ability to manage stress and cope with increased emotionality will promote calming. Interpersonal communication skills in listening and communicating assertively, and cognitive skills like positive thinking, will also promote calming.

3. Promoting a sense of self-and community efficacy

Those affected by a mass trauma are at risk of losing their sense of competency in handling life events. Believing that one's actions can lead to a positive outcome is vitally important.

Analytical skills, planning and goal setting, including the ability to break down the problem into small, manageable units, will help people increase their sense of efficacy.

4. Promoting connectedness

A lack of social support and connections is recognized as one of the highest risk factors for post-traumatic stress disorder.

Interpersonal life skills can strengthen social connections. Personal and interpersonal skills in initiating and developing social relationships, using good communication and listening skills, and the ability to empathize and cooperate will promote a sense of connectedness.

5. Promoting hope

Mass trauma is usually an experience people are not prepared for – it outstrips all usual coping mechanisms. Failing coping mechanisms naturally lead to lack of hope.

People who maintain positive thinking and have strong coping skills have been shown to have a more favourable recovery than those who are unable to. Having a strong belief, strong values, a responsible government, as well as positive mass media messaging, can reinforce this positivity.

Key reference materials

Hobfoll, Stevan et al. 'The road to resilience. Five Elements of Immediate and Mid-Term Mass Trauma Interventions' in *Psychiatry*, vol. 70, pp. 283-315, 2007.

IFRC. *The road to resilience. Bridging relief and development for a more sustainable future*. Geneva, 2012.

UNICEF. *Inter-Agency Guide to the Evaluation of Psychosocial Programming in Humanitarian Crises*. New York, 2011.

IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support. *Rebuilding hope*. Film. Copenhagen, 2009.

Life skills in the field



CHAPTER

2

Life skills in the field

Life skills in the field looks at examples of life skills activities and programmes from around the world. Examples are drawn from psychosocial support and education programmes, as well as from prevention, emergency response, recovery and development settings. Tailoring programmes is crucial in supporting people's recovery, taking account of age, gender, health, etc. and in relation to needs and capabilities.

Different needs

Dramatic changes and challenges face the world today related to poverty, inequality, violence, health and climate change. Everyone is affected in some way and especially so when crisis events occur. Harnessing skills, abilities and creative problem-solving potential in these kinds of situations is crucial to sustainable longer-term recovery and well-being. Mobilizing the resources of communities through life skills programmes promotes recovery and supports sustainable development. Many life skills programmes offer this support by focusing on specific age groups and needs. Different groups have different needs, and offering activities based on those needs and capacities helps the broader community, as well as those taking part in the programmes. The example below shows how psychosocial activities organized by the Turkish Red Crescent built up the overall resilience of people in the refugee camps.

Coping with stress helps refugees

Turkish Red Crescent set up camps for Syrian refugees fleeing the unrest that began in Syria in 2011. They offered psychosocial life skills activities targeted at different age groups and for people with special needs. Stress management was one of the life skills included in the programme. It was taught in a safe atmosphere so that feelings and thoughts could be shared freely. This helped those participating to understand their reactions to being a refugee and gave them an opportunity to express their emotions. The activities helped 'normalize' their new living situation, which was especially important for the children. Generally, group activities helped establish new bonds and strengthened existing relationships. This was helpful in building the overall resilience of the refugees in the camps.



In this chapter we look at different groups including children, youth, men and women, older people and people living with disability, and volunteers.

Children

Children are especially in need of care and protection when faced with very difficult circumstances. Their needs and well-being are paramount after a disaster. How children cope and how resilient they are depends on a wide range of factors. These include their age and gender, family background, life situation, and their sense of belonging and acceptance within the community. Sometimes children who have gone through extremely difficult times need particular care and support to help them cope and recover.



Nazia Rustam/Pakistan Red Crescent Society

Empowering children

In Sichuan, the Red Cross Society of China has integrated their psychosocial support programme into the school curriculum. The activities aim to help children to adjust after the 2008 earthquake and to move on with their lives. The programme includes a personal and interpersonal life skill module, where teachers and students do activities focused on 'giving thanks,' where they find ways of showing their appreciation for teachers, parents, the school as well as the nation. Similar programmes have been implemented in Pakistan.

Children who are empowered through life skills education acquire knowledge and develop attitudes and skills which support healthy behaviours. Personal skills such as self-awareness and management of feelings, cognitive coping and problem-solving skills, and interpersonal skills such as assertive communication can help children to recover emotionally and resume everyday activities. In a recent children's resilience programme implemented in an area where there had been a military occupation, a 12 year old boy said: "Before I participated in the programme, I heard the sounds of machine guns inside my head. Night and day, the noise continued without any pause. Now I am free to play. Before the programme I could not speak my mind to my parents, relatives or teachers. Now I feel confident and can talk freely." Through the programme, the boy learned about his reactions and how to deal with them. He and his friends learned to speak up in front of adults – a big achievement in a society where this is not usually the custom.

Children's coping depends on:

- age
- gender
- disabilities
- family background
- life situation
- sense of belonging
- level of acceptance within the community
- social support mechanisms, etc.



Nino Stradze/Georgia Red Cross Society



Street girls use life skills

In Bangladesh, life skills help street girls survive against the odds. With no access to formal education, NGOs offer non-formal education, health education and mentorship to this very vulnerable group of children. Girls working in Dhaka City use life skills when coping with street life. Unity is one of the key elements and the girls have realized that they can solve problems together. One group of girls said, “If one of the girls works in a house and the employer tortures her or blames her for stealing, we can go to that house together to make the employer understand that we are poor but we are not thieves.” The girls also decided to act against abuse. “We can work together to make sure no one assaults a girl and goes unpunished.” The girls could, for example, call the police or challenge employers or other men who had been violent. The girls wanted to identify other community members who could be part of their initiatives to bring justice. They also realized that the solution was not just about avoiding trouble-makers, but also to some extent, accepting that some trouble was beyond their control.

Involving parents and caregivers

Involving parents and caregivers in activities usually strengthens children’s support networks. Provided there are no child protection issues, connecting with and including parents, caregivers and other trusted adults is of great benefit to children. In *The Children’s Resilience Programme*, for example, community meetings, parent and caregiver meetings and trainings for facilitators on participatory methods all build up community support in the lives of the children involved.

There are many ways of involving parents and caregivers. Strengthening positive parenting skills, organizing support groups, providing toys for communities to help children enjoy playtime with their friends again – all these activities help parents and caregivers, and in the process support children’s well-being too. After the 2010 floods, volunteers with the Pakistan Red Crescent Society met single gender groups of parents to discuss children’s reactions to disasters and how to promote their well-being. The volunteers used resources from the IFRC PS Centre website on children’s stress and coping for these discussions.



Children with special needs

While some programmes for children have a broad focus on all children in a given community, other programmes target children with special needs, such as children living with communicable diseases or children living with a disability.

Youth

Adolescence is a time of physical, social and psychological transition between childhood and adulthood. Perceptions and definitions about adolescence vary across the world depending on local realities, culture and beliefs. Youth can represent a tremendous resource to their community, bringing energy and idealism to situations. They can also be particularly vulnerable in times of distress; especially if protective family members are lost, or there is disruption to education or if communities are displaced. Youth face pressures exposing them to hardship and violence through, for example, early marriage, child labour, recruitment to armed forces. They generally have fewer resources to deal with these difficulties and are still in the process of developing a sense of self.

Different needs

When working with adolescents, it is important to look precisely at the needs of the group in question. All youth cannot be seen and grouped together as if they were the same. Younger and older adolescents have different needs, for example, and programmes targeting youth must take these differences into consideration. It is equally important to be aware of gender differences, as young males and females may not have the same needs. There is a general tendency in humanitarian and development programmes to overlook the needs of young adolescent females. In a midterm evaluation of a Red Crescent Society programme, for example, young men were found to have more opportunities to participate in social activities (in football tournaments and excursions, for example) than young women. The young women were not allowed outside home except to attend school. The programme rectified this by offering a Red Crescent beauty parlour. The activities in the beauty parlour were used as an entry point for other socially acceptable life skills activities, including stress management, coping with feelings and how to communicate assertively. This example demonstrates the importance of having gender-specific life skills activities in mind, when planning and evaluating life skills programmes.

Reducing stigma and discrimination

Stigma and discrimination against children made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS is a major problem in schools in Ethiopia, and a programme to combat this was implemented. The programme focused on increasing life skills to adapt to the situation and to become more accommodating towards children who are living with or affected by HIV and AIDS. A peer education programme began with life skills sessions on communication, conflict resolution, making changes, overcoming challenges and decision-making. These life skills have helped the children to solve problems, to communicate more positively and to become more integrated. The most vulnerable children have become more assertive and are more able to cooperate with other children. During a life skills training, a girl explained: "A while ago I quarrelled with a friend. After the conflict resolution session we came together and spoke about what happened. My friend is living with HIV and I had 'badmouthed' her. I realized that I was to blame and I apologized."



Life skills for resilience

Young people benefit from acquiring specific life skills to strengthen their natural resilience. Personal skills, such as understanding and learning to cope with overwhelming emotions and changing bodies, help young people to cope with stress and change in their lives. Practising empathy, too, helps youth learn respect and tolerance for others. Interpersonal skills such as cooperation, negotiation and conflict resolution, all play an important role in transforming conflict situations into more peaceful alternatives. After a period of armed conflict, cognitive skills, such as understanding diversity, can facilitate youngsters' feelings of solidarity, which is important in building peace.

#

Leaving the path of violence

Uganda Red Cross Society conducted an assessment in Northern Uganda, focussing on internally displaced young men who were living in camps there. The young men had grown up during the war, leaving them traumatized. Many of them had a history of drinking and sexual violence. The young men had lost hope in the future. The Red Cross decided to run a stand-alone life skills programme focusing on empathy and dealing with peer pressure. During the programme one of the young men realized the harm he was doing to himself and other people. He took the opportunity to learn how to grow tomatoes to sell in the market, and in the process found a livelihood to enable him to be independent.

36



Danish Red Cross Youth

Life skills for prevention

Learning life skills can also prevent young people from harming themselves or being exploited or abused by other people. Knowing how to communicate – a basic interpersonal skill – helps youngsters in many different ways. Strengthening cognitive skills, such as how to analyse a situation, for example, helps in evaluating the likely impact of other people's actions. Being aware of their rights can build confidence too in young people seeking protection and care. They can also play a role in explaining the importance of having rights to other community members. Given the opportunity, young people can reduce their vulnerability if they build their skills and knowledge and have support at this crucial time in their lives.



Men and women

Life skills activities are usually community-based and provide valuable help to the people directly and indirectly affected by whatever difficulty is at hand. Men and women who have been empowered by strengthening their life skills are better able to care for themselves and others. In *The Children's Resilience Programme*, the sessions run for parents or caregivers are much appreciated. Parents and caregivers express gratitude in learning new skills in listening and talking to their children and in understanding their needs. With new life skills, self-confidence improves and this builds resilience in the entire community.

Take account of different needs

In the face of crisis events, adults have to learn to cope with the challenges and stress in their own lives and in the lives of those depending upon them. How men and women respond in times of hardship depends on their strengths and vulnerabilities, and the protective and risk factors operating in their lives. When planning life skills activities in different contexts, it is important to take these factors into account.

Cultural expectations and norms govern how to plan and organize life skills activities. Age, socio-economic and marital status, race and educational level all influence needs and opportunities too. It may make sense to have single gender groups or to set up support activities for those sharing similar experiences, like bereavement, unemployment, or living in a community affected by drug abuse.

Psycho-education

Psycho-education is a method that focuses on strengthening people's capacity to manage difficult life situations. It typically provides basic information about common reactions to crisis or the impact of chronic disease and offers training in coping skills for reducing stress. Psycho-education empowers participants, enabling them to understand their own or family members' reactions to distressing situations, providing training in coping mechanisms, skills and competencies, and offering resources and alternative opportunities for dealing with difficulties in a challenging and stressful life.



Strengthening the recovery process

The recovery process can be helped through strengthening:

- interpersonal skills, for example, in knowing how to develop social networks and in being assertive
- cognitive skills, such as rational thinking, realistic goal setting and problem solving
- personal skills, such as coping with feelings.

Choose the right path

Honduran Red Cross has created a violence prevention programme for young adults, centred around 'meeting spaces.' Here, young adults can meet for educational activities and psychological support. The programme has been implemented in an area where it is easy to get lost in drug abuse and violence. Life skills help the young adults who have been rejected all their life to change their ways. They learn to talk about their challenges and how to resist peer pressure and how to set goals. The programme is long term, as violence prevention takes time. It is based on a relationship of trust, allowing people to open up and be prepared to change. A young man who has now become a Red Cross volunteer, says, "Now we walk through the world smiling and say to other young people – choose the right path!"



Gender issues

In most societies, men and women have different roles. These different roles lead to men and women having different needs and possessing different life skills. Ignoring or being blind to these differences can have serious implications for the protection and survival of people caught up in crises. Women and men often highlight different concerns and bring different perspectives. It is therefore crucial to listen to and consult with both men and women so that responses benefit everyone equally.



Alister Bignell



Networks build life skills for trafficked women

Norwegian Red Cross is providing assistance to female survivors of human trafficking. The women who have been trafficked are lonely, have low self-esteem and lack trust in other people. Red Cross volunteers meet with the women once a week to prepare a meal together, and after dinner, help the women with homework assignments. Many of the women are enrolled in public education programmes, learning skills for when they return to their countries of origin. Norwegian Red Cross also runs a befriending network where women from the programme are mentored by volunteers. The Red Cross activities aim to create stability and a feeling of safety in the women's lives, after a period of extreme hardship. The volunteers provide opportunities for the women to talk about what they have experienced. As they build trusting relationships with the women, the women learn to relate to and trust other people again. They gain confidence and begin to reflect on and understand what they have been through and their reactions. All these opportunities for growth and recovery are strengthened through the building of personal, interpersonal and cognitive life skills.

Gender

The term 'gender' refers to the social differences between females and males throughout the life cycle that are learned, and though deeply rooted in every culture, are changeable over time and have wide variations both within and between cultures.

IASC. Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action, 2006.



In some cultures women will not speak about certain issues in front of men, and vice versa. Good life skills programming may therefore need to involve single-gender and mixed groups. This is especially important when addressing gender-based violence. Supporting women to build their self-confidence and assertiveness, for example, also requires the active involvement and support of men. Otherwise, women may face a backlash from men, and the challenges facing men may not be adequately addressed.

Building up specific life skills in women's activities can help prevent violence and abuse too. Learning how to use non-aggressive, assertive methods of saying no can help in dealing with the threat of violence. Knowing how to avoid potentially dangerous areas and being self-aware builds self-esteem and confidence. It is also crucial to build life skills in seeking help, for example, in finding information about crisis or psychosocial support centres and legal assistance.

Older people

Lack of public awareness and information about older people's contributions, circumstances, issues and needs often creates negative images of ageing. This leads to marginalization and disregard of their capacities and needs. Older people can be extremely vulnerable in a crisis or if caught up in a hardship over an extended period of time. With challenged family and community structures, they may be left to fend for themselves, leaving many feeling lonely, useless and scared, even when they may be coping somehow with their situation.

Leif Jonsson



Letting go of shame

A woman who participated in a Red Cross life skills programme in Southern Africa was a victim of sexual abuse. She was constantly afraid, could not sleep at night, had nightmares and did not trust anyone. She attended a life skills camp and says of the experience, "In the beginning I felt very insecure. We began playing games and did role plays. We talked about abuse and I found out that others have experienced things like me. I learned how to be assertive and say no to abuse with words and with my body language. In the role play we got to practise this. We talked about our own value as humans and I learned how to build my self-esteem. This made me realize that I should not be ashamed of what happened." The woman also realized how important it was to get an education and that she had to fight for her future.

Older people are more likely to suffer from the global financial crisis and climate change. Livelihoods of poor rural and urban families are affected in all countries, with a serious and disproportionate impact on the poorest. More people have been impoverished due to the crisis. This increases the economic and social burdens on those already struggling with limited access to healthcare, safe water and sanitation, inadequate food, poor shelter, an insecure environment and lack of financial security.

Older people are among the most vulnerable groups during conflicts. Establishing meetings points or safe spaces can be very useful for the elderly. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, armed conflict has resulted in millions of internally displaced living with host families or in camps. The social and community connections that many older people normally rely on have broken down, leaving older displaced people isolated

from family and community. ‘Social spaces’ have become important for many older Congolese. They meet to discuss and analyse their challenges and help each other solve problems. Trainings on older people’s rights are provided and intergenerational activities, where older and younger people listen to and support each other, help reduce the gap between the generations.

With these kinds of activities as with most life skills activities, time is needed for the activities to take effect. Older people living in a prolonged humanitarian crisis may need to develop a broad array of life skills, including cognitive skills such as knowing how to use appropriate coping mechanisms, personal skills such as how to cope with feelings and needs, and interpersonal skills such as how to establish and nurture new relationships.

Empowering older people

After the 2010 Haiti earthquake, HelpAge International, an organization helping older people to claim their rights, created a programme where volunteers became friends with older people in the camps for earthquake survivors. The elderly received visits, help with personal care when needed, information about health and security, and they were offered emotional support. Some time after the earthquake, an older woman was struggling with heart palpitations, agitation and anxiety, all activated by a fear of an approaching hurricane. A friend helped her focus on sensations in her body, as she remembered the day in May when a clean water source finally arrived at the camp. “We concentrated specifically on sensations of the cool water when she could finally drink, and feeling the water on her hands as she washed her clothes and dishes,” explained her friend. These coping skills helped her overcome her fears and face the hurricane in a calmer state of mind.



Persons living with disabilities

Around one billion people are estimated to live with some form of disability. *The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* protects and promotes the rights of persons living with disabilities. All life skills programmes and activities should therefore include and be accessible to people with disabilities.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) recognizes the human rights of persons with disabilities by promoting, protecting and ensuring full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms with respect for their inherent dignity. Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.



41

Unfortunately, however, many people living with disabilities face barriers in terms of unequal access to health care, education, employment opportunities and income. Empowering them through targeted life skills activities can improve their psychosocial well-being, thereby promoting their active participation in the communities in which they are living.

Building self-confidence and self-worth through personal life skills activities, for example, can help in relation to challenges in daily life. Cognitive skills training can help in enabling people with disabilities to claim their rights and break down prejudices. It is important to support people with disabilities in order that they may become aware of their rights, live independently, and develop their skills.

Mainstreaming life skills

Mainstreaming life skills activities for persons with disabilities is vital to reinforcing integration, together with special initiatives to address specific needs. Programmes

Discrimination

Discrimination occurs when persons are prevented from exercising their rights due to their disabilities.

should always be designed to benefit everyone, including persons with disabilities, taking account of specific needs at all levels. *The Children's Resilience Programme*, for example, stresses that no child be excluded because of disability, and that activities be adapted so that everyone can participate. When selecting children for an activity or programme, it is crucial that all-inclusive, non-discriminatory methods are used.

Terminology

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) uses the term 'persons with disabilities.' Other international and national guidance and resources on disability use 'persons with disabilities' and 'people with disabilities.' The term 'persons with disabilities' is generally preferred since it is used in the Convention. The term 'persons with disability' refers to individuals, whereas the term 'people with disabilities' is sometimes perceived as a more collective term. Some flexibility in use is recommended to help communicate the right message.

Families with disabilities

Parents with disabled children and parents with disabilities themselves have particular needs. In some communities, families with disabilities are marginalized and excluded. They are often denied access to education and employment, and have little contact with other people.

Life skills activities offer families support in dealing with the challenges in dealing with crisis events. In a life skills workshop in Uganda, for example, one of the participants reported her astonishment in speaking out for the first time. The programme had given the young male and female participants the opportunity to share their opinions and ideas and this had given them confidence and courage for the future.

Attitudes change when children with disabilities speak up

One Red Cross Red Crescent programme for families affected by armed conflict and natural disaster focused on life skills and recreational activities. The attitude towards children with disabilities changed when they were included in the sessions in schools. The children told their new classmates that when the shooting started, some of them had been left behind. This story affected the children who were listening, and they expressed their sympathy and compassion to their disabled classmates. One important outcome was that a big sports tournament involving the entire community included the disabled children for the first time ever, with sport activities adapted to their needs.

Promoting inclusion

To promote the inclusion of children and parents with disabilities:

- Establish self-help groups where parents can meet other parents, learn about the disability, how best to support their child and negotiate for their rights, etc.
- Advocate for rights in education, health and other services and raise awareness in communities about barriers in accessing services and physical structures.
- Include people with disabilities in planning, implementing and evaluating services.
- Make sure information is accessible and provide transport and additional assistance where needed, so that families can access services.
- Arrange social events to support inclusion.

Handicap International. Disability Checklist for Emergency Response, 2005.

Realizing the potential

A local NGO in Rwanda held some workshops for parents and guardians of visually impaired children. The workshop programme included information about the rights and capacities of people with visual impairments and provided training in orientation and mobility skills. After the programme was over, parents expressed their gratitude, saying that they were very pleased with what they had learned. Before the programme, they had stopped their children from using some of the skills they had learned in school, but after the workshop this had changed.



Nick Heppenstall



Ståle Wig/Norwegian Red Cross

Volunteers

Volunteers often find that they benefit personally from learning life skills in the course of their work in assisting vulnerable people in times of crisis. A Philippine Red Cross volunteer helping children after a typhoon hit Mindanao in 2011, reported how playing and talking had enabled the children to recover. He saw how, in the midst of deep grief, they could open up and tell their story. Through these activities the children began to regain hope for the future. The volunteers themselves were trained in stress management and this, together with learning how to organize and present information to peers when under pressure, proved to be crucial life skills for their work.

After the bomb and shooting attacks in Norway in July 2011, the Norwegian Red Cross organized regular group follow-ups, where volunteers could share what they had experienced. A special programme was implemented to train and assist volunteers to provide support to the affected young people and their relatives returning home after the tragedy. In the programme, the volunteers learned many cognitive, personal and interpersonal skills that helped them in their personal lives as well as in their voluntary service.

The Afghan Red Crescent Society set up a life skills programme for their volunteers in 2012, focussing on coping with feelings, stress management and active listening. This focus on personal and interpersonal skills helped prepare the volunteers themselves in serving in extreme conditions and in remote areas.

Volunteers benefit too

Volunteers with the Palestine Red Crescent Society benefit from the life skills activities they facilitate with groups. A volunteer said, "When I first met the other volunteers, they were shy and did not want to share their own opinions. But it was amazing to see how they grew with the task. For example, they used games to help participants express their opinions, which resulted in increased self-confidence. At the same time the volunteers themselves became more confident! A female volunteer who was severely restricted at home told me that now it was easier for her to talk to her parents. The life skills activities had a healing effect on all the volunteers."



Key reference materials

Bruijn, Paulien et. al. *Count me in. Include people with disabilities in development projects. A practical guide for organisations in North and South.* Veenendaal, 2012.

Handicap International. *Handicap International Disability Checklist for Emergency Response*, 2005.

IASC. *Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action*, 2007.

IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support. *Community-based Psychosocial Support: A training kit.* Copenhagen, 2009.

IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support. *Psychosocial Interventions: A handbook.* Copenhagen, 2009.

IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support and Save the Children. *The Children's Resilience Programme: Psychosocial support in and out of schools.* Copenhagen, 2012.

IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support. *Caring for Volunteers: A psychosocial support toolkit.* Copenhagen, 2012.

IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support. *Children's Stress and Coping.* Emergency Response Unit leaflet.

Life skills needs assessments



Life skills needs assessments

Life skills needs assessments describes why needs assessments are important and gives information on how to plan and conduct a needs assessment relevant for a life skills intervention. Different types of assessments are described and sample questions are provided for different target groups. Examples from the field are used throughout the chapter.

Why do assessments?

Assessments are critical in determining what life skills activities are relevant in a given context. Before programme planning begins, a needs assessment identifies what the situation is, how people are functioning and how they perceive their needs and the possible solutions for themselves. The assessment process itself raises awareness of the link between life skills and recovery.

Life skills assessments generally use the same methodology as psychosocial assessments. More detailed information about assessment methods can be found in *Psychosocial interventions, A handbook* (IFRC PS Centre), *Inter-Agency Guide to the Evaluation of Psycho-social Programming in Emergencies* (UNICEF), and *Assessing Mental Health and Psychosocial Needs and Resources: Toolkit for humanitarian settings* (WHO and UNHCR).

Needs assessments are central to planning and implementing life skills activities. They identify the particular needs and resources of the affected community or population, and in the process highlight vulnerable groups such as children, out of school youth, single-headed households,

migrant workers or those living with disabilities. Assessments also identify issues arising as a result of the crisis event which may challenge or constrain implementation of a life skills programme.

Needs assessments can be done in a number of different ways. In an emergency response, for example, there may not be much time to do a comprehensive assessment. In this situation, a rapid assessment provides a quick snapshot of what is going on and how people's functioning is affected, so that appropriate activities can be planned. In a situation where there is on-going contact with a group of people, a number of assessments are likely to be needed to take account of changes in circumstances over a sustained period of time.

Needs assessments

A needs assessment helps in:

- determining the current level of understanding of life skills in the community
- identifying sub-groups with special needs for life skills interventions
- developing programme objectives rooted in local needs
- developing indicators
- identifying and selecting the life skills to be strengthened
- tailoring life skills activities to selected target groups
- providing opportunities to network with community leaders and members.

National Societies in Scandinavia, for example, typically provide on-going psychosocial support to people seeking asylum. Inevitably, circumstances change once individuals or families are granted or denied asylum. A family's resettlement needs, once they have been granted asylum, will be very different from their needs when they were seeking asylum. Doing needs assessments at different points of time will help gather detailed information about the changed situation. This information can then be used to plan life skills activities appropriate to the challenges at hand.



Water everywhere – stories from the floods

A delegate described a rapid psychosocial needs assessment in Pakistan after the 2010 floods. “The scene was chaotic when we arrived in what was left of the village. All around us – nothing but water and devastation. I was surrounded by more than twenty women, all telling me their story at once. They were clearly in a state of extreme distress. There had been a flash flood that had swept many houses away. The children were very anxious too. They clung to their mothers. No-one was playing. I asked the women how they were coping and what problems the floods had caused. I also asked how people were helping one another, how many female-headed households there were and how the children were doing. I joined my male colleagues to get an overall feeling about the resiliency of the community and the resources they had. My colleagues had been talking to the men about the losses they had experienced.

After about an hour we moved on, and in the evening we discussed our findings from the different locations we had visited. Based on the interviews and our observations, it seemed that coping with stress was the most important life skill for adults and children at this point. If they learned to deal with their stress, the community would be able to begin to rebuild their lives. I also suggested distributing sets of play items to communities, so that children could begin playing again.”

A few weeks later, a more detailed assessment gave in-depth information for a recovery life skills programme that was planned.



Key elements in conducting an assessment

A life skills needs assessment looks into the particular needs of community members, taking culture, norms, values, gender, age and special needs of people into consideration.

1. Engage the community

Engaging community members, leaders and key personnel from the very beginning ensures that assessments are based on their experience and local knowledge. Communities should also be involved in the decision-making process about changes affecting their lives. People such as elders, religious leaders, social workers, teachers and health workers are generally respected, know their community well and understand its needs and resources. They can also offer advice with regard to local custom and cultural practices.

Community members – i.e. those affected by a crisis event – should be involved in needs assessments. This helps with the assessment, of course, but more fundamentally involvement promotes empowerment: When a community as a whole feels involved, individuals regain some control of the situation and this is an important factor in building psychosocial well-being again. The Mongolian Red Cross Society, for example, implemented a national life skills programme to prevent sexually transmitted diseases and involved gay men's groups in assessing needs and planning the programme.

2. Respect culture

Behaving in a culturally appropriate way is fundamental to a good assessment. Knowing how to enter households, or how to greet people, for example, or if single gender groups are required to enable men and women to express their views appropriately; all these things are governed by local custom and practice. In a gender-segregated culture, for example, it is vital to ensure that there are females on board who can meet the women to assess their needs, as men may not be able to meet and discuss issues with women. There may also be people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds affected by a crisis event. It is crucial for assessment teams to be aware of this in order to approach people appropriately.

Assessment teams must be mindful of conflicts within communities and ensure that all parties are included in an assessment. In communities where there is an on-going dispute about land rights or access to resources or there is a fight over family matters, for example, assessment teams must be impartial and independent. All parties must also be protected against possible tensions arising from participating in the assessment process.



Life skills for children after a mudslide

After a major mudslide in a remote village in Afghanistan, the local Red Crescent branch went into the community to assess what help was needed. Houses, streets and the school were filled with mud. The community leaders agreed that Red Crescent volunteers would initiate a clear-up campaign, and that the school would temporarily move to a mosque. Red Crescent volunteers would give sessions about disaster preparedness in the school, with the aim that the children would then pass on information to their families. This plan represented a big change in the way things were usually done. Children are not typically expected to speak in front of adults. Part of the plan therefore included life skills training in doing this. This plan resulted from being engaged in assessing needs and discussing possible interventions. The community itself then decided how the Red Crescent could help them in the most appropriate way.

Inclusion of various groups

Life skills needs assessments should include different groups of the affected population; different ages, members of both sexes, people with disabilities (physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments), and people with diverse cultural, religious, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds. Life skills needs assessments must ensure confidentiality, respect of privacy, voluntary participation, and the best interest of participants.



3. Mainstream gender

A gender analysis puts women, girls, boys and men at the centre of a needs assessment. It is about asking whether and how the situation affects women and men of all ages differently. For example, within a household, a gender analysis might look at differences between female and male levels of psychosocial well-being or self-respect. It is good practice to include both men and women in assessment teams and to speak systematically with men, women, boys and girls together and separately. Without a needs assessment broken down by sex (and age), it will not be possible to identify who is most at risk, and then plan a targeted response.

Questions highlighting the differences between men's and women's experiences include:

- What problems has this event caused for men and for women?
- Are the problems for men and women the same or are they different?
- What problems has this event caused for boys and for girls?
- Are the problems for boys and girls the same or are they different?

Gender analysis

Gender analysis examines the relationships between females and males. It examines their roles, their access to and control of resources and the constraints they face relative to each other. A gender analysis should be integrated in a humanitarian needs assessment and in all sector assessments and situational analyses.

Adapted from IASC. Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action, 2006

Needs assessment indicates different needs for men and women

The Kenya Red Cross Society provides life skills training to prisoners in preparation for their release from jail. In a needs assessment, a gender analysis indicated that female prisoners had different life skills needs than male prisoners. When male and female prisoners were asked the following questions, "What are your main worries at the moment?" and "What would be helpful for you in moving on?" the men talked about their worries of not having vocational skills. The women, however, talked about their fear of losing contact with their children. This information helped tailor activities to the two groups. The women's activities would focus on personal and interpersonal life skills, helping the women in maintaining contact with the children separated from them during their prison sentence.

4. Include people with disabilities

Unfortunately, crisis events may render people with disabilities more vulnerable to psychosocial distress. Loss of social supports, for example, and changes in the physical environment are particularly difficult to manage. Sometimes individuals may be harder to find, but including people with disabilities in assessments ensures their needs are recorded and promotes psychosocial well-being in itself. Including specific questions on disability in assessments will flag critical issues. People often get injured or face new problems after a crisis event because things have changed so much. Questions about their needs now must address these issues. However, it is very important that people with disabilities answer all the assessment questions – not just those that are about disability.

The assessment team itself must protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities. Assessors must also ensure that staff and volunteers protect and promote these rights in their work. Consider what barriers to access there may be in the assessment process itself. For example, use at least two forms of communication and simple language or pictures to be sure to reach everyone. Use accessible venues for meetings and offer transport and other assistance to help people to participate in assessments.

Addressing disability

Locating and identifying people with disabilities can be complicated. Asking directly if a person has a disability may not be an option. The person or their family may not identify themselves as being disabled. One way of asking this question could be, “Do you or anyone you know have difficulty in walking or climbing steps, seeing or hearing, etc.?” Sometimes caregivers (usually family members) are not able to attend meetings about disability issues, being unable to leave the person with the disability unattended. Some families may feel guilty about mentioning problems out of fear of being accused of neglecting their responsibility.

5. Collaborate with other organizations

Collaborating with other organizations working in the broader psychosocial support sector brings a number of different benefits. Sometimes information or resources can be shared in the needs assessment process itself. Organizations also sometimes have developed materials useful to a programme. In a life skills assessment in Pakistan, for example, a large number of women asked for easy reading material on certain health issues. The organizations that were collaborating on this initiative responded to this request.

Needs assessments done in collaboration with other organizations reduce the risk of services being duplicated. And when gaps are found, they can be followed up on in coordination with the collaborating organizations. This happened in Thailand after the tsunami in 2004 and in China after the earthquake in 2008, when components of life skills programmes were integrated into the official school curriculum.

Different types of needs assessments

1. Rapid assessments

Rapid assessments are done quickly in the course of a few days, usually in the immediate response phase of a disaster or crisis. They provide a snapshot of needs and are a first

step in gathering information about a situation. Rapid assessments take a broad sweep, gathering demographic data, information about the context, identifying problems, resources and capacities, and establishing priorities for assistance. If it is found that people need to develop their skills in managing the crisis situation, a life skills programme or a life skills component in a programme might be relevant.

2. Detailed or comprehensive assessments

Detailed or comprehensive assessments define in more detail the needs and resources of the affected population or group. They identify the specific areas of need that will be the focus of the life skills programme. These more detailed assessments can inform in-depth planning and can serve as a reliable baseline for monitoring and evaluating purposes later. The Haiti Red Cross Society spent a considerable amount of time assessing psychosocial needs, in order to transition from recovery interventions into long term planning of psychosocial interventions after the huge earthquake in 2010.

3. Continuous needs assessments

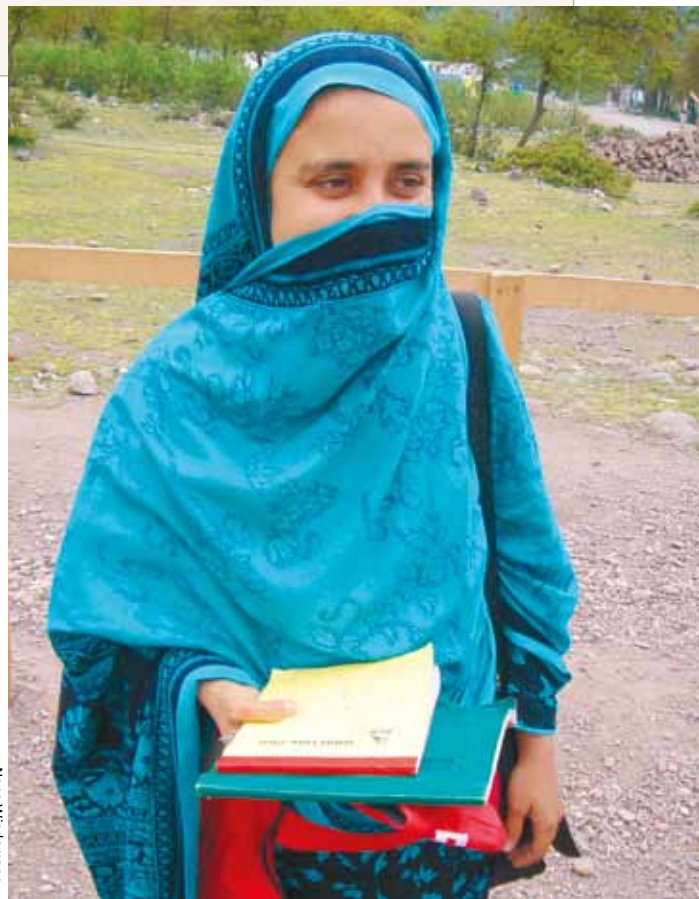
Continuous needs assessments can be done in the course of monitoring activities to take stock of needs at any given time. They can be done at any point and are as simple as posing a series of questions about a specific issue. They can also be done whenever there is a new or an unexpected development in the programme itself.

Programme staff and volunteers can do these types of assessments themselves. At a big sports and social event, organized as part of a children's resilience programme in Haiti, for example, a group of young people from the local community approached the staff to ask if they could have similar activities organized for them. This led to a discussion about their needs. Programme staff asked them questions like, "What did you enjoy about the life in the community before the crisis event?" and "What would you like to see happen in the community for young people now?"



A detailed needs assessment in a conflict situation

In the Middle East after a civil war, many had to flee to a neighbouring country. A PS delegate and a staff member conducted a needs assessment of the needs of the refugees in their host country. They developed questionnaires for three target groups: men, women and children. The team travelled across the country and met refugees in the branch offices of the National Society. The assessment showed that the refugee youth was deeply affected by the on-going war in their country of origin and had lost hope in building a future in their host country. The needs assessment recommended a combination of life skills workshops and recreational activities to help the youth focus on the future and in making changes in their new lives.





Life skills needs assessment checklist

Background information

Gather data about the situation at hand and access relevant resources from official institutions, UN and other organizations.

Resources and gaps

Find out which other organizations are involved in psychosocial support and life skills programmes, and what they are doing. Identify resources and gaps to determine the scope of the assessment and timeline.

Choice of method

Decide on the most suitable methods for doing the assessment, taking account of the kind of life skills that community members are already using. Work out sampling strategies, tools and questionnaires, etc.

Logistics

Recruit and train the team, think whether translators are needed, field test the questionnaire, organize logistics, ensure supervision of data recording, plan data entry and analysis.

Key findings and next steps

Identify key findings and agree an action plan for planning and implementing a life skills programme. Present and discuss findings and when relevant, share with the community or target population.



A successful continuous needs assessment

An NGO in Bangladesh established women's community development groups dealing with poverty, gender inequality and violence against women, including early marriage and dowry demands. But women had stopped attending the groups. A continuous needs assessment – involving women still in the groups, those who had dropped out and the facilitators – indicated that the facilitators needed more training themselves. The assessment highlighted personal and interpersonal skills training was needed, including coping with feelings, showing empathy, building trust, active listening and assertive communication.

Assessment questions

Different types of questions can be used with different groups, either in individual interviews, focus group discussions or for self-assessment. Framing questions about life skills may be a challenge. Questions must be easily understandable, as well as appropriate to the situation. They must be relevant for planning in identifying the life skills that are needed. Always take time to pre-test the questions to make sure they can be easily understood and are relevant to the situation. Focus on information that is needed to plan and implement the life skills programme.

Questions highlighting the strengths and resources of the people affected by the crisis event should be included, as well as those that address their needs. Questions about existing cognitive, personal and interpersonal life skills will then help tailor planned activities to the particular situation at hand.

Assessments typically use open questions beginning with 'who, what, when, how and where' rather than closed questions that can only be answered with a 'yes' or 'no'. These types of questions establish how people view their own situation. This will help in deciding if and what activities or programmes might be implemented. Typically around 10 to 12 questions are used for individual interviews.

Sometimes asking direct questions can be experienced as too confrontational. Using an indirect approach can be helpful as an alternative. For example:

- Do you know if anyone in the community is...?
- Has anyone experienced this...?
- How do you know if a person is doing well?
- How do you know if a person is not doing well?

Basic open questions for individual interviews and focus group discussions include:

- How do you understand your situation? And how do other people see it?
- What do you do to cope? What do other people do?
- What are the main concerns?
- What would characterize a good situation?
- What are helpful skills in order to move forward?
- What strategies would you recommend to others in a similar situation to solve the problems they face?





Focus group discussions

Focus group discussions usually feature five or six main questions. In preparing questions, the challenge is to think through what information is really important and to frame the questions accordingly. It is also crucial to work out how to collect information from the discussion so that it can be analysed later. One way of doing this is by asking the focus groups to rank or map their concerns.

Focus group discussion

A focus group discussion gathers participants together in an interactive group setting to discuss a topic (in this case, questions in relation to life skills needs assessment). A facilitator asks questions in a systematic way and responses are recorded. Questions typically relate to participants' experiences, opinions, beliefs, attitudes and ideas. The first question opens the discussion, usually asking for participants' opinions about the topic at hand. This allows for different perspectives to be aired. Participants then discuss questions together and build on each other's responses.

Sample focus group questions for key community members:

- What do you think caused X (i.e. the crisis event)?
- What do you think has happened as a result?
- What do you think will be the longer-term consequences?
- How has community life been affected?
- Who is suffering most in the community?
- Who is doing well in the community?
- Who has responded well to X (i.e. the crisis event)?
- How would you describe the characteristics of the people who are doing well?
- Would it be possible to learn some of the same qualities?
- What would the community need to learn or what would need to change for this to happen?

Self-assessment questionnaires

Self-assessment questionnaires are used to ask people to assess their own needs, individually or in small groups. Using simple, targeted questionnaires provides a picture of how people understand and experience their own needs and the way they perceive others and the world around them. This information can then be used to develop life skills interventions appropriate to the situation.

Sample questions for self-assessments:

- What problems were you facing before the crisis event?
- Give an example of how and why something went wrong in your life or for someone you know.
- How did you or other people solve the problem?
- How would you or other people have liked to have solved this problem?
- What problems do you or other people have now (after the crisis event)?
- What direction do you or others want life to take now?
- What do you or others have to do for life to take this direction?
- How could you or others learn to do this?
- How would you or others be able to solve old problems using these new life skills?

Expectations

An assessment may raise expectations. It can be challenging to conduct a life skills needs assessment, if a community is in dire need. People being interviewed may ask about when assistance will be forthcoming. It is important that assessors answer carefully saying, for example, if they don't know whether there will be a programme following the assessment, "I am sorry, but unfortunately I don't have any information about that. We are assessing needs at present. I would like for us to talk about this after the interview. Do you feel able to go on with the interview now?" This type of response can also be used whenever immediate needs overshadow discussions or interviews.

Needs assessments after crisis events

For needs assessments during or after crisis events, it is important to find out how the crisis event has affected the population in terms of their psychosocial life skills. A needs assessment will seek to find out what strengths and resources people had in relation to their life skills before the crisis event as well as how they are coping now. These questions focus on cognitive, personal and interpersonal skills:

Cognitive skills

Questions here assess in what ways people cope with the current situation, how they create a sense of meaning in everyday life, if they know where to go for information and what vocational skills would be relevant. For example:

- What has changed in daily life and in the community following the crisis event?
- How do people in the community understand their own situation?
- How are they dealing with this situation?
- Do they know where to go for information?
- What do people need to do to act effectively in this situation?
- Do they have vocational skills suited to the changed situation?

Personal skills

Questions here assess in what ways people know how to handle feelings and needs, how they manage stress and how they manage changes and challenges. For example:

- What feelings are you or others in the community experiencing in the situation?
- How are you and others able to manage these feelings?
- What are the main concerns for you and others at the moment?
- Is anything making you particularly scared or nervous?

Interpersonal skills

Questions here assess in what ways people care for the well-being of others; if they are able to communicate effectively and avoid misunderstandings that lead to conflicts; if they are able to cooperate and negotiate; if they are participating in cultural activities and traditions and if they are able to carry out the usual household tasks and make a living.

- Does anyone in the community need special care and attention? For example, who is caring for female-headed households?
- Do you or others know how to communicate to get heard?
- Are the needs of all community members ensured?
- Are you able to observe cultural traditions?
- What were the good things in your life prior to the crisis event?

Questions for detailed or comprehensive needs assessments

Comprehensive needs assessment are used for a longer-term programme or the recovery phase after an emergency. More questions are used than in the rapid assessment to get an in-depth picture of the needs and resources of the community. These more detailed assessments can serve as a baseline for monitoring and evaluation purposes later.



Till Mayer/IFRC

Sample questions for community leaders, social workers, teachers and others:

- How has the event affected community members emotionally?
- What emotions were most prominent before the crisis event?
- What emotions are most prominent after the event?
- What could help community members feel safer, less angry or confused?
- What would they need to learn or change for this to happen?
- Has the event affected community members' ability to make decisions, plan and move forward?

- In which ways has community members' ability to make decisions, plan and move forward been changed?
- What could help community members become better at making decisions, planning and moving forward?
- What must community members learn or change for this to happen?
- How has the event affected community members' communication and interaction with others, such as family members and relatives, neighbours and friends?
- In what ways have the community members' communication and interaction with others changed?
- What could help community members to better communicate and interact with others?
- What would community members need to learn or change for this to happen?

Sample questions for adults and older people:

- In what way has the situation affected you or others emotionally?
- What emotions are most prominent after the event?
- What could help you or others feel safer, less angry or confused?
- What could help you deal with or change these emotions?
- Has the event affected your ability to make decisions, plan and move forward?
- In which ways has the ability to make decisions, plan and move forward changed?
- What could help you become better at making decisions, planning and moving forward?
- What would you need to learn or change for this to happen?
- Has the event affected the way you communicate and interact with others, such as family members and relatives, neighbours and friends?
- In what ways has communication and interaction with others changed from before the event to now?
- What could help you to better communicate and interact with others?
- What do you or others need to learn or change for this to happen?

Sample questions for children and youth:

- What did children experience during the crisis event?
- How were the children or young people feeling before the event?
- How are they feeling after the event?
- What did children or youth do before the event?
- What do children or youth do when they feel angry, sad, worried or scared?
- Do they play and spend time with friends and do sports now?
- Why or why not?
- Can children and young people talk to friends and family about how they feel?
- If not, why can't they talk to friends and family about how they feel?
- Could they do so before?
- What can children or young people do to feel better?
- What do they need to learn or change for this to happen?

Sample questions for parents and caregivers:

- What did your child or other children experience during the crisis event?
- What are the signs that your child or other children are not well?
- How are the children feeling after the event?
- How were your child or other children feeling before the event?
- What did your child or other children do before, when they felt well?
- What does your child or other children do now, when they feel angry, sad, worried or scared?
- Does your child or other children do sports and play with her or his friends now?
- What would help your child or other children feel better?
- What does your child or other children need to learn or change for this to happen?
- How would you know if your child or other children are doing better?

Informed consent

Informed consent should be obtained from each individual before beginning an interview or group discussion. Informed consent must be given by parents or caregivers for children under 18.

Informed consent covers the following:

- The name and organization of assessor or team
- A description of the work of the organization
- The purpose of the assessment
- Information for participants about anonymity and the voluntary nature of participation
- Time for questions from informants
- Written or verbal permission (or refusal) to be interviewed.

Informed consent

WHO recommends the following for getting informed consent from adults:

Hello, my name is _____ and I work for _____. We have been working in ____ (area) to _____ (type of work) for ____ (period). Currently, we are talking to people who live in this area. Our aim is to know what kind of problems people in this area have, to decide how we can offer support. We cannot promise to give you support in exchange for this interview. We are here only to ask questions and learn from your experiences. You are free to take part or not. If you do choose to be interviewed, I can assure you that your information will remain anonymous so no one will know what you have told us. We cannot give you anything for taking part but we would greatly value your time and responses.

Do you have any questions?

Would you like to be interviewed?

1. Yes
2. No



Red Cross Society of Panama



Organize, analyse and interpret findings

The information gathered in a needs assessment needs to be organized and analysed before planning can begin. All the information, opinions, needs, wishes and ideas from the community forms the basis for defining whatever life skills intervention or programme will be implemented. The next steps include:

- collating and organizing the information
- analysing the information
- interpreting the information.

Raising hopes

The Honduran Red Cross found an alarmingly high rate of young people affected by drug abuse in some areas. As a result, the young people behaved very passive-ly and seemed to have lost hope in the future. An action plan based on the findings of a detailed needs assessment prioritized the following: learning cognitive skills for work such as goal setting, personal skills such as handling stress, and interpersonal skills such as saying no to peer pressure.

Indicators

An indicator is a simple and clear statement that can help measure and communicate change. A good indicator will help in the evaluation of life skills interventions and programmes. The indicators should be linked to the cognitive, personal and interpersonal life skills that the programme is focusing on.



This analysis provides information that is useful in developing clear indicators for programme objectives. It helps in deciding what cognitive, personal and interpersonal life skills will be at the core of the programme.

The final step in needs assessment is in prioritizing recommendations for programme planning and implementation and writing an action plan based on these recommendations. The action plan details all the steps for planning and implementing a life skills intervention.

Key reference materials

IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support. *Psychosocial Interventions: A handbook*. Copenhagen, 2009.

WHO and King's College London. *The Humanitarian Emergency Settings Perceived Needs Scale (HESPER): Manual with Scale*. Geneva, 2011.

WHO and UNHCR. *Assessing Mental Health and Psychosocial Needs and Resources: Toolkit for Humanitarian Settings*. Geneva, 2012.

See International Online Resource Centre on Disability and Inclusion: www.asksource.info/index.htm

Source is an International Online Resource Centre managed by Handicap International designed to strengthen the management, use and impact of information on disability and inclusion in development and humanitarian contexts. It is primarily intended for use by practitioners and academics.

Planning life skills programmes



4

CHAPTER

Planning life skills programmes

Planning life skills programmes follows on from needs assessment and gives detailed guidance on setting achievable goals and objectives together with appropriate indicators. It describes the different kinds of programming approaches and activities that can be used for life skills programmes. There are a number of examples from the field, including an example of a log frame for a youth programme integrating life skills with livelihood support. The chapter ends with a checklist for programme planners.

From assessment to planning

Needs assessment and planning are closely linked. Needs assessment identifies local capacities and needs and gives suggestions for solutions to all those affected. This is crucial information for identifying the life skills to be strengthened, developing objectives and planning what kind of programme would be most suitable.

The planning process begins with defining the overall objective representing the aim of the programme. This overall objective is achieved through a series of immediate impacts and outcomes, together with the outputs and inputs required to realize the programme. Time and resources are often limited during crisis events, so it will be critical to make plans based on accurate information about funding and include a timeframe for activities.

Programme impact

Planning begins with a definition of the long-term impact (or overall objective) based on the findings of the needs assessment. This is a statement that characterizes the overall aim or goal of the programme. It is informed by definitions of well-being and 'a good situation' from the needs assessment.

Terminology in psychosocial programming

Different terminology can be used in psychosocial programming but the consensus agreed in the *Inter-Agency Guide to the Evaluation of Psychosocial Programming in Humanitarian Crises* is for 'impact, outcome and output.' These terms are also used in this book.

The long-term impact is achieved through securing more immediate impacts (or immediate objectives). These take account of financial, technical and logistical resources within the implementing organization, as well as assets and resources in the communities. They represent the changes that beneficiaries say will improve their situation.

Immediate impacts define which life skills the programme will focus on. At this stage, it is important to clarify how any given skill will contribute towards achieving the



immediate impacts. Using “if...
...then...” sentences tests under-
lying assumptions in objectives.

In the programme for IDP youth
quoted above, the assumptions are
as follows:

- If the skill of building trust in others is strengthened, then a foundation for supportive peer networks among IDP youth is created
- If the skills of cooperating and negotiating are enhanced, then supportive peer networks are built
- If the skill of caring for the well-being of others is enhanced, then an important component of improved supportive peer networks is in place.

Example of immediate impacts

In a programme for IDP youth, the immediate objectives include:

- improved coping mechanisms and strengthened resilience
- improved selfconfidence and sense of control
- established peer support structures.



Examples of long-term impacts

In a life skills programme planned for a group of IDP children and youth living in a camp in a host community, the overall objective is “the improved psychosocial well-being of internally displaced children and youth.”

In a life skills programme in a setting with a long history of physical violence and conflict, the overall objective is “enhanced security, improved conflict mitigation and a strengthened culture of non-violence.”

This process helps in ranking the life skills, and therefore begins to shape programme planning. In the example above, building trust is a foundation for peer networks. Caring for the well-being of others also depends on trust being established. This means that the programme with IDP youth would begin with trust building activities and then progress to other skills to achieve the immediate objective of creating supportive peer networks.



Life skills in relation to needs and immediate impacts

	Needs and challenges	Life skills	Achievable immediate impact
		If	Then
Cognitive skills	Passive behaviour after a crisis event	skills in analysing situations, making decisions and setting clear goals are enhanced,	participants will be active in their own recovery and that of their community.
	Coping is difficult because life has changed so much	skills in recognizing problems and solutions, in avoiding conflicts and danger, and in creative thinking are enhanced,	participants will be able to focus on realistic and attainable goals.
	Distress after a crisis event makes it difficult to understand, use and evaluate information	abilities to think critically about multiple messages, make decisions, and analyse the consequences of decisions are strengthened,	participants will be able to act according to information, needs and preferences.
	Rise in crime, violence, abuse and other types of dangers and harm in an emergency-affected area	abilities to identify and analyse dangerous situations and make sound decisions are boosted,	participants will be able to avoid danger and protection and self-protection is improved.
Personal skills	Fear, anger, sadness and despair after a crisis event make meeting life's challenges difficult	skills in recognizing and analyzing feelings are practised,	participants will be able to focus more calmly on the situation as a whole.
	Lack of self awareness	skills of self-reflection, awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses and the ability to recognize needs for self-care are promoted,	participants will be able to relate positively to others and bounce back after a crisis event.
	Low self-esteem and sense of responsibility	skills in management of feelings, coping with stress, knowing personal values, strengths and weaknesses and in negotiating fair solutions are built,	participants will build up their self-confidence in order to engage constructively in the community.
Interpersonal skills	Lack of empathy	the ability to understand feelings and needs of others is strengthened along with good listening and communication skills,	participants will have a foundation for dialogue, reducing social isolation.
	Conflicts erupt when stress is high and resilience is low after a crisis event	negotiation skills and the ability to deal with conflicts in a non-violent way are promoted,	participants will learn conflict resolution and violence prevention.
	A culture of misunderstandings, lack of social cohesion due to communication difficulties	skills to understand and pass on messages in an effective way and the ability to articulate are strengthened,	participants will learn how to be part of a group and have relationships that provide a sense of belonging and appreciation.



Maman Kotak/American Red Cross

Programming approaches

Red Cross Red Crescent uses four main models for psychosocial programmes: Life skills stand-alone, Life skills plus, Life skills integrated and Life skills as an entry point. Life skills activities can form stand-alone programmes or complement other interventions in various ways. For example, personal skills training can be built into livelihood projects, or interpersonal skills training can be provided for an established community water management committee.

Life skills stand-alone

'Life skills stand-alone' is planned as an entity in itself with a part time or full time manager, staff, volunteers and budget. A stand-alone programme can cover an extensive geographical area and have many beneficiaries learning a broad range of life skills. In the CABAC programme (Children Affected By Armed Conflict) run by the Palestine Red Crescent, for example, children and their families learn to overcome the effects of living in an on-going crisis. A stand-alone programme can also be quite small, with a specific timeframe and special focus.

Life Planning Skills

Uganda Red Cross Society has a stand-alone programme called Life Planning Skills. It helps young people learn how to look after their bodies, grow personally, collaborate with others, make decisions, protect themselves, and achieve their goals. The programme has its own budget and a local focal person has been appointed specifically for the programme. Life Planning Skills has a single focus on life skills, responding to an urgent need for these skills among young people. Ugandan youth face a great number of challenges: lack of education, unemployment, teenage pregnancy, school dropouts, a high prevalence of HIV/AIDS and limited possibility for influence on their own situation. Young people often lack the skills and possibilities to make healthy decisions in life. In order to improve the living situation of Ugandan youths, Danish Red Cross Youth supports Uganda Red Cross Society in implementing youth projects aimed at promoting behavioural change among vulnerable youth and giving them the opportunities to pursue healthy, viable lives. The primary means of this are peer-to-peer education, training and support to the youths' own initiatives.



Life skills plus

'Life skills plus' integrates life skills needs with basic survival needs, such as food, shelter, water, clothing and livelihood. It is a holistic response, enhancing and supplementing the delivery of basic services. Knowing life skills can be a tremendous help for staff and volunteers as well as beneficiaries. They are better equipped to handle all programme components, including communicating with beneficiaries or offering psychological first aid. This ensures that the best service is provided to all.



Jérôme Grimaud

Life skills in the Health Emergency Response

When the Health Emergency Response Unit (ERU) of Red Cross Red Crescent is sent to assist in emergencies, psychosocial support is often integrated in the deployments. Psychosocial volunteers assist the health staff in several ways. They talk to all the people using the ERU. They take extra care of beneficiaries showing signs of distress. Volunteers also disseminate information and education materials about normal reactions to disasters and give advice on coping, etc. They arrange play activities for children and organize support groups, such as groups for parents who have lost children.

IEC materials

Information, education and communication materials (IEC materials) are used in many emergency responses. IEC materials carry simple key messages that are easy to understand in a crisis situation, and are effective in sharing messages on normal reactions to crisis, how to cope with such reactions and how to seek help.

The Emergency Response Unit leaflet called 'Coping with stress and crisis,' for example, describes the features of extreme stress and gives concrete advice on how to cope with stress reactions:

1. Remember that stress reactions are normal reactions to an abnormal situation.
2. Allow yourself to feel sad and grieve.
3. Maintain daily routines and do things that normally give you pleasure.
4. Eat healthy foods, get sleep and exercise if possible.
5. Socialize with other people instead of withdrawing.
6. Seek support and assistance.
7. Accept assistance that is offered.

Life skills integrated

'Life skills integrated' has activities or programme components integrated into broader programmes. Life skills components sometimes form a core part of lots of different programmes, including livelihood, educational, health and care or disaster programmes. This approach increases their quality and impact. Staff may not be specifically recruited to focus on life skills, and the administrative and financial management lies with the main programme.



Life skills as entry point

'Life skills as an entry point' uses activities to engage the affected population. Life skills can be the starting point for other interventions in response to the needs of the community. In fact, strengthening life skills can help a community to formulate needs. The following example from India shows how life skills enable remote communities to secure their rights and access basic services.

Youth in South Sudan learn skills

The South Sudan Red Cross supports young people in a programme featuring life skills as an integrated component. This approach was used due to the particular vulnerability of young people living in the extreme situation that characterizes South Sudan. Life skills such as setting personal goals are one of four components. The others are psychosocial support, reproductive health and sexual education, and vocational training. The overall objective of the programme is to provide a holistic response aiming at ensuring a healthy and productive environment for young people.



Stephen Regel



Life skills ensure basic needs are met

A NGO in Southern India uses life skills as an entry point when working with tribal communities in mountain areas. These communities are marginalized with little or no access to resources and services. Difficulties in obtaining official identity cards mean that communities are not able to access public assistance, including water, education and health. The NGO first assists communities in formulating their needs and provides information about their rights to public assistance. Secondly, they organize training sessions on assertive communication to enable community members to apply for public assistance. Once the basics are in place, the NGO and community members then decide together what they will tackle next. Very often they choose to focus on health and education.

Life skills activities in emergencies

In emergency settings, all four approaches described above can be used. In fluctuating circumstances it is vital to adapt to the current situation. There may be short or long-term disruption in people's lives, services and infrastructure, so life skills needs may change. There is a range of options for programming, and it is possible to achieve something even in a short space of time. Even a brief intervention can make a big difference if it is well designed. Meeting over a weekend or for an hour every day for a short time may be very beneficial in many situations.

Life skills are relevant in all phases of an emergency. Along with basic needs for food, water, shelter, safety and family reunification, life skills activities can help restore psychosocial well-being. In fact, strengthening resources to manage in an emergency will enable people to be more resilient for the future.

Keep it simple

People affected by emergencies can be left with a general feeling of loss of control. When planning activities, keep information clear and simple. Provide it in different formats and repeat it so that people can take it in, think about it and remember it.

Defining outcomes and outputs

Once impacts have been defined and the decision made about what kind of programme approach to use, the next step is to plan the outcomes and outputs expected during the course of the programme.

Outcomes

Outcomes are “the behaviours, attitudes and practices that need to be applied to achieve the immediate objective(s).” Successful outcomes therefore depend on how well skills have been learned and how well knowledge is applied into practice.

Transfer of knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour into practice

People gain most from life skills activities when they successfully apply what they have learned to their own situations. This is what is meant by the transfer of knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour into practice. It is important that:

- participants are engaged in planning the content of programmes, that they actively participate in learning, and that they define their own goals.
- participants are encouraged and believe they can make use of the life skills they have learned. This will strengthen their confidence in their own abilities.
- activities allow participants to gain knowledge about skills, as well as get feedback about the new behaviours they are practising.
- activities are similar to everyday life situations. Using exercises and role plays building on the participants’ own examples make this possible.
- participants have the opportunity to reflect on what they are doing and why they are doing it.
- life skills are immediately used in daily life. This fixes the transfer more securely.

Outputs

Outputs are the measurable achievements produced as a result of the intervention. Outputs leading to such outcomes as trust, care and self-driven support networks could include:

- the formation of eight youth groups of 28 young people with a formalized leadership structure
- two workshops on trust building
- four team-building sessions
- one workshop about peer support.

Outputs can be formulated by asking the question, “What activities facilitate the achievement of the programme outcomes?”

Different life skills activities

Life skills programmes can take on many forms and include a wide range of activities organized in different ways to give participants opportunities to learn. Life skills activities can include one or more of the following elements:



Danish Youth Council (DUF)

Trainings and workshops

Trainings and workshops give participants an opportunity to strengthen existing capacities, learn new life skills and test alternative ways of thinking and reacting through presentations, demonstrations, exercises, role play, group work and group discussions. They provide a safe space for participants to learn and grow personally. Usually participants are encouraged to apply what they are learning in their everyday lives and can be given simple exercises to use in their daily life. This ensures that when the training or workshop is over, skills such as being a good listener, being able to speak up about rights, knowing how to avoid and solve conflicts and being more confident, are consolidated, and personal growth continues.

Peer education

Peer education is often the preferred method when working with children and youth, as they tend to understand and relate well to one another. The method has great potential to spread knowledge and to initiate change to wider groups. Through life skills peer education, children and young people learn and grow, enhancing their level of understanding, attitudes, behaviours, skills and knowledge.

Peers

A peer belongs to a group of people with the same characteristics such as being of the same age and background. A peer group can also refer to those working at the same level within an organization.



Peer education changes life on the streets

A young street girl from Bangladesh found that her life had changed after she became involved in peer group work: "I now work as a peer educator at the drop-in centre. I walk around the city and search for other girls like me and tell them not to stay on the streets, as it is not safe. I tell them that the centre is a nice place where they can get an education, shower, sleep and eat. I also teach the girls about the side effects of drug abuse. I like the drop-in centre and I want to continue as a peer educator." The study found that the girl's outlook on life changed, after learning new skills in mobilizing other girls and in increasing her awareness about the dangers of drug abuse.



Leif Jonasson

Peer educators usually attend a 'training of trainers', so that when they meet their peers, they are familiar with whatever issues are being addressed, and have resources and materials at hand.

Support groups

Support groups can be formed, either as part of a life skills programme, or as the core activity of a programme. Support groups can also be organized to help participants support one another and practise their skills when a programme ends.



Family Support Groups

Swedish Red Cross runs a stand-alone support programme for families who have lost a family member to suicide. The families come together for a weekend where they spend time as a family and in peer groups. The objectives are to help families cope with the complicated thoughts and feelings that arise after a suicide. They learn cognitive and personal skills such as understanding that the suicide is not their fault, and how to regain control of their other thoughts and feelings. Information about reactions to crisis events normalizes the crisis process. The weekend creates a space where participants can shape their thoughts and feelings and encourage constructive coping strategies. For some families, healthy coping can include strengthening their interpersonal skills such as learning to talk to each other about feelings and emotional needs.

Psycho-education

Psycho-education aims to increase understanding and awareness of certain reactions related to challenging events and helps people cope better with their difficulties. For example, where a family member has received a cancer diagnosis, a psycho-education session could be set up for the whole family. The session might cover common reactions, how to tell friends and family about the disease, how to face the future without fear, and where to access help and information.

Psycho-education can also be done through information campaigns at clinics, schools, IDP or refugee camps and community centres or in information sessions organized for those concerned. Psycho-education can also be integrated into workshops, allowing participants to share thoughts and challenges and discuss helpful coping strategies.

Positive role models

Role models can have a positive impact on people's lives. Positive role models can help participants see new possibilities for themselves and may give encouragement and instil hope. In *The Children's Resilience Programme* there is a workshop on how to live with HIV. The session suggests inviting a person living with HIV to give a presentation about themselves and to answer questions from participants. This can be done in lots of different settings. Fathers could be invited to talk to young men about tackling anger, for example, or young women to groups about standing up for their rights and saying no to violence. Meeting someone who has overcome hardship in a positive way can be a very powerful and inspiring experience.

Advocacy campaigns

Advocacy activities are often used in life skills projects and programmes aiming at changing attitudes and behaviours. They seek to reach a wide target group with information about important topics related to life skills. These campaigns use various means including posters, leaflets, events, meetings and media coverage. Examples include advocacy campaigns about communicable diseases, and violence reduction posters targeting men illustrating anger management and conflict resolution. Advocacy campaigns can also target duty bearers and authorities, providing information about the psychosocial implications of a given situation and suggesting actions for change.



Involvement works

In the conflict-prone region of Karamoja in northeastern Uganda, one life skills programme focused on conflict management and reduction of armed violence. Advocacy activities were integrated into skill-building activities for young people who were at risk of committing violence. One activity was drama groups, where participants developed plays on the risks and hazards associated with the use of violence. In developing the plays, the youngsters analysed their own vulnerabilities and reflected on the risks they imposed on themselves by resorting to violence in pursuit of goods or food. The plays were presented in four districts and some were even converted into radio shows. An impact assessment about the programme found that community members found them very powerful in terms of attitude and behaviour change. This was attributed to the accuracy and relevance of the messages, combined with the sense of authenticity arising from seeing young people who had themselves changed attitudes and behaviours.



Bianca Luff

Indicators of change

In order to monitor and assess the progression in a programme, indicators are used to measure change. They are needed to measure the long-term and immediate impacts, as well as the outcomes and outputs.

Indicators are usually formulated in consultation with the target group. Definitions for healthy coping mechanisms, strategies for planning for the future, and causes of social isolation, for example, are generated by the target group and then used as a basis for indicators. In a life skills programme for adolescents in a rural area, for example, the adolescents were asked to define self-confidence. Some defined self-confidence as believing in themselves, what they do and their abilities. Others focused on the fact that they have self-respect and know they are valuable or good enough, even though they may not be perfect.

Indicators are used to measure change. An indicator should therefore be phrased in a way that makes it possible to assess both positive and negative changes that have happened in the programme period. For example, if an outcome states the intention of creating change such as ‘improved conflict management mechanisms,’ then the indicator should state a measure of that change, e.g. a 50 per cent reduction in the number of conflicts leading to violence.

Indicators at the different levels of measurements are likely to have the following characteristics in life skills programmes:

Definition of a good life

In a stand-alone life skills project for war-affected youth in Uganda, one of the impacts was to promote the well-being of adolescents. In an initial session, participants were asked to discuss and define a good life. They came up with a list which was used to formulate indicators:

- Having basic needs fulfilled
- Being healthy
- Being free from difficult challenges
- Having good, close friends
- Having a free mindset
- Living responsibly
- Being able to respond to challenges.

Level of measurement	Characteristics of indicators
Long-term impact	Changes that represent sustainable and long-term transformation of problems and needs, which the programme can contribute to but maybe not achieve alone.
Immediate impacts	Practical changes in participants’ daily lives that a programme is expected to create within, or shortly after, the project period.
Outcomes	Behaviours, attitudes and practices that represent the transfer and application of skills.
Outputs	Planned achievements ‘put out’ in the process of implementation.

The programme impacts, outcomes, outputs and indicators can be summarized in a logical framework matrix (log frame). A log frame structures the main elements of a programme highlighting the linkages between them:



Log-frame

This log-frame is a simplified version developed for a two-year programme integrating life skills with livelihood support in a region with a history of violent conflict between individuals and ethnic groups. The programme has been implemented in 57 villages in four districts. The target groups are youth at risk of committing violence, local leaders and community members.

	Description	Indicators	Means of verification
Long-term impact	Enhanced security, improved conflict mitigation and strengthened culture of non-violence.	Number of violent incidents. Proportion of peace meetings that lead to mutual satisfaction with response to violence.	Police records of violence. Minutes from inter-ethnic peace meetings.
Immediate impacts	Improved community capacity to prevent and address conflict escalation. Improved sense of safety in targeted communities. Strengthened vocational alternatives to violence.	Proportion and number of conflicts that escalate into violence. Perception of safety. Self-reliance of youth at risk of resorting to violence.	Focus group discussions with community members before and after programme. Household survey in targeted communities. Records of employment before and after enrolment in vocational training.
Outcomes	Improved anger management, conflict management and communication skills. Improved social constraints on violent acts. Improved livelihood skills for groups prone to violence.	Changes in behaviour of individuals in conflict. Proportion of community members who step in when witnessing conflict escalation and violence. Participants demonstrate vocational skills relating to local employment opportunities.	Participant self-assessment of demonstrated examples of change in behaviour, recorded in monitoring forms. Focus group discussions with community members before and after programme.
Outputs	Targeted number of youth trained in anger management, conflict management and communication. Targeted number of local leaders and community members trained in conflict management, negotiation and communication. Targeted number of youth enrolled in vocational training.	Actual number of youth trained in anger management, conflict management and communication. Actual number of local leaders and community members trained in conflict management, negotiation and communication. Actual number of youth enrolled in vocational training.	Attendance lists for training sessions with youth. Attendance lists for training sessions with local leaders and community members. Photos from training activities. Enrolment records from vocational training schools.

When life skills are integrated into broader programmes, indicators are incorporated into the main programme log-frame. A water and sanitation programme, for example, could have an immediate objective to establish sustainable water management committees with life skills outcome indicators including a high degree of group cooperation, group coherence and skills to take leadership in community sanitation practices. This means that life skills outcomes are documented separately in the context of the whole programme.

Checklist for programme planners

In the process of designing a life skills programme, there is a dynamic relationship between planning the programme and the practical, logistical, financial and human resources needed to implement it. At this point the required inputs need to be organized in line with available resources and capacities within the organization and the targeted population.

Facilitators

Facilitators must be empathic and have good listening skills. They must be able to guide participants in an empowering way. They create an enabling social space for interactions and provide a supportive environment for learning. Relating life skills learning to participants' lives is essential too when conducting life skills activities.

- What kind of facilitators should be recruited for the target group? Who is trusted, respected and able to interact with the target group in a participatory manner?
- Should facilitators include members of the target population?
- What skills are needed for the life skills activities that are being planned?

Time

The timing and duration of a programme need to be planned, alongside working out the programme approach and the types of activities that will be provided. It is very important at this point to take account of the commitments that participants may have. This could be work commitments, educational activities, harvesting, etc.

- What period of time is needed to meet learning outcomes?
- How often should participants meet?
- How much time can participants and facilitators allocate to the activities?
- How can activities be timed without conflicting with participants' other commitments?

Venue

Life skills activities in any form require a safe space where participants can engage in learning. This means finding a physical space where there is no risk of threat or disturbance.

- Where can activities be implemented?
- Where can activities be located to ensure safe access for participants?
- Which threats to a sense of safety and privacy should be taken into account in the choice of location? What can be done to secure confidentiality and – if needed – prevent access from non-participants in the location?
- How accessible is the location?
- What transport needs are there in using this location?

Learning materials

There is a wide range of materials available for life skills activities. Check what is already available to see if there are materials that fit the programme being planned. Materials must fit the context and be sensitive to cultural norms and practices. If specific training materials are needed, extra budget might be needed to buy them or to commission someone to write them. A list of life skills resources can be found on p. 110.

- Are there any materials available that are relevant to the planned programme?
- Are the activities in the materials appropriate to the learning outcomes of the planned programme?
- Do materials need to be revised? Are new materials needed for the planned programme?

Capacity

Implementing a life skills programme depends in part on the capacity of the staff and volunteers involved. Before the programme begins, therefore, capacity-building will usually involve a 'training of trainers.' In the training, facilitators are introduced to the programme and oriented to the content, the purpose of activities and the approach they will be using. The training guides facilitators in how to create a safe, social and physical space for the activities.

- What trainings are needed for facilitators?
- Who can train facilitators on the learning materials and the programme's approach, objectives and types of activities, etc.?
- What support and supervision is needed and how can it be provided?

The manual, *Caring for Volunteers: A psychosocial support toolkit* from the IFRC PS Centre, provides extensive information about support to staff and volunteers.

Logistics

Logistics includes procurement of equipment and other items; arrangements for transport (of facilitators/participants/caregivers, etc.); storage of equipment, etc. Most life skills activities can be done at relatively low cost, as the main inputs are in conducting the activities. Flipcharts, marker pens, paper and refreshments are usually the basics that are needed. More costly activities such as running a youth camp with accommodation and food would need to be included in the planning and budgeting, along with all the other items.

- What equipment is needed to implement the planned activities?
- What is already available and what needs to be bought?
- Who is authorized to procure equipment and other items?
- What transport is needed for the programme? Does it cover multiple locations?
- Where will training materials and equipment be stored between activities?

Finances

A core part of programme planning is developing a budget and defining a clear system of financial management and accountability. The budget summarizes the cost of all inputs giving an overview of allocation of resources. Budget headings include:

- Facilitators' pay and on-costs
- Volunteers' expenses
- Printing of materials
- Cost of training of trainers
- Equipment, including stationery
- Venue hire
- Refreshments
- Transport of facilitators/volunteers/participants/caregivers
- Needs assessment
- Monitoring and evaluation.

Key reference materials

IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support. *Community-based Psychosocial Support: A training kit*. Copenhagen, 2009.

IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support. *Psychosocial Interventions: A handbook*. Copenhagen, 2009.

IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support and Save the Children. *The Children's Resilience Programme: Psychosocial support in and out of schools*. Copenhagen, 2012.

IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support. *Lay Counselling. A Trainer's Manual*. Copenhagen, 2013.

IFRC. *Sexual, Reproductive Health and Life Skills for Youth Peer Education. A Guide for Trainers of Facilitators*. Johannesburg, 2010.

IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support. *Caring for Volunteers: A psychosocial support toolkit*. Copenhagen, 2012.

UNICEF. *Inter-Agency Guide to the Evaluation of Psychosocial Programming in Humanitarian Crises*. New York, 2011.

Implementing life skills programmes



CHAPTER

5

Implementing life skills programmes

Implementing life skills programmes describes how to conduct life skills programmes and activities, following on from the previous chapter on planning programmes. Skills and methods in facilitation are detailed and the role of facilitators in creating a participatory learning environment is explained. Examples taken from Red Cross Red Crescent programmes illustrate the chapter, and ideas for structuring sessions are provided.

Endorsing the programme

Life skills programmes support psychosocial well-being, enabling people affected by crisis events to deal with difficulties and strengthen coping mechanisms. A key step in the implementation process is engaging in dialogue and raising awareness about the benefits of a life skills programme. This means involving relevant stakeholders such as public authorities, service providers, and local leaders in supporting and endorsing the programme. When done well, this will encourage the participation of community members. For example, a starting point for a programme for children would be to meet parents and caregivers. Parents are invited to an information meeting about the programme. They are given an overview of the programme and information about the facilitators and the implementing organization. This is important so that they can feel safe in letting their children participate, and so that they know how to support them during the programme.

Fair selection of participants

The selection process must balance the protection of those in need with transparency in the identification of participants. It is crucial that this is done fairly and openly and in a non-stigmatizing way. One way to prevent stigma, for example, is in the naming of the programme. Calling a programme for people affected by HIV 'Positive Living' rather than 'A Support Programme for HIV Patients' will present a positive image for those taking part and for the whole programme.

How the selection process operates will depend on the circumstances of the target groups. A programme seeking to contact people affected by a natural disaster must disseminate information widely to ensure equal access. A community meeting is often held to reach out to potential participants. Partnering with community leaders, teachers or social workers with local knowledge about the target group is also useful in identifying individuals who may need help. Any programme with a limited number of participants must have a transparent selection process for it to be legitimate in the eyes of the community. A programme targeting a specific group such as survivors of sexual violence must also have a fair selection process, though naturally enough this will be done confidentially and use networks such as shelters, women's associations and police authorities.



Conducting life skills programmes and activities

Facilitators, volunteers and staff are key people in ensuring the success of programmes and activities. Their ability to create a safe environment, present information, discuss issues in a non-judgmental way and support relationship building is essential. Dedicated facilitators, staff and volunteers need support themselves. *Caring for Volunteers, A Psychosocial Toolkit* from the IFRC PS Centre has detailed information on how best to support volunteers.

Facilitators

Facilitators have varied roles, sometimes presenting information and then enabling participants to talk about and reflect on the issues presented. Facilitators moderate discussions and contribute ideas and points of view. They must demonstrate good listening skills, reassure participants and activate emotional support within the group. This is particularly important when dealing with emotionally charged and sensitive issues. Participants sometimes talk about distressing experiences, for example, open up and share vulnerabilities. Sometimes participants may not say much, but this does not necessarily mean that they are not engaged in learning.

Participants

Participants play an active role in their own learning by setting their own goals, as well as learning from the facilitators. Facilitators model positive behaviour during the activities and serve as role models for open and effective communication. Participants always watch closely, and they can learn if a facilitator ‘walks the talk.’ Please see the *Trainer’s book* from *Community-based Psychosocial Support* and *Facilitator Handbook 1: Getting started* from *The Children’s Resilience Programme* for more detailed information.

Interpreters

If needed, it is best to recruit interpreters who are acquainted with the values, approaches and terms used by Red Cross Red Crescent. Having experience interpreting in workshops and trainings and being familiar with life skills is also helpful. Interpreting takes time, and requires advance preparation if materials such as Power Points need to be translated.

Facilitators

The role of the facilitator is an enabler – helping participants to express themselves, to explore and learn. Relating topics to participants’ own lives is essential, as this transforms the learning process from being pure acquisition of theoretical knowledge towards understanding and integration of new skills. This places high demands on the facilitators’ people skills. Facilitators must be warm and supportive, respectful of opinions and able to support and guide participants, taking care not to dominate activities.



Nana Wiedemann

Briefing interpreters before a workshop or training is essential to make sure that they understand everything in the programme, including concepts and materials to be used. They should also be briefed about possible emotional responses from the participants. Ideally, a debriefing should be done afterwards too, to discuss reactions to the programme.



Manuals

Most life skills activities are programmed as trainings and workshops and are implemented using a manual. Sometimes a manual can be used 'off the shelf.' There is a list of useful manuals and handbooks starting on p. 110.

If you are writing a new training manual, make sure the format is clear and concise and that facilitators can readily follow the structure and content. A training manual will usually include:

- An introduction to life skills, describing what they are and how they will be taught
- Programme schedule and overview of sessions
- Session outlines, including learning objectives and duration
- Materials needed for the sessions and background information for the facilitator
- Session activities, including:
 - ice breakers and energizers
 - new concepts and skills
 - exercises and practice of new skills
 - application of skills to life situations
 - homework assignments
 - closing activities to end each session
 - evaluation
- Overall monitoring and evaluation tools.

A participatory learning environment

Life skills activities are learner-centred, and should build on and include the participants' own experiences. Participants will be engaged in many ways. They will think about issues presented, discuss the topics with other participants, and engage in exercises and role plays. Activities will often be based on or related to the practical experiences of the

participants, as this makes the sessions relevant for them. This also helps participants apply what they have learned to their daily lives.

Setting goals for each session links the objectives of the programme to the activities that are being planned. Learning goals are most useful when they are clear and unambiguous. For example: "I want to learn to speak calmly even when I am angry," or "I want to learn to show affection to my family." Try not to make too many goals for a single session and be practical about what is realistic and manageable for participants.



Use these or similar questions with participants either before the sessions or at the beginning of the first session:

- What do I see as my main challenges in relation to life skills?
- What would I like to learn to overcome these challenges?
- Where would I like to see myself after these sessions?
- How will I contribute to the learning environment?
- What will I do to make good use of the skills I have learned?

At the end of the programme participants can use these goals for self-evaluation (see chapter 6, p. 103).

Engaging participants

All life skills activities should be interactive and participatory. Children as young as five years of age can be engaged in skills-building using interactive methods. Participants build their skills and competencies through active participation. This approach is used widely in initiatives across the Red Cross Red Crescent such as in the RespectEd: Violence & Abuse Prevention Programme, Exploring Humanitarian Law, Youth as Agents of Behavioural Change, *Community-based psychosocial support*, *Lay Counselling* and *The Children's Resilience Programme*.



Jérôme Grinaud

Scheduling activities

Activities can be scheduled in various ways. They can take place in shorter, more intense periods of time or be scheduled as regular sessions over a longer period.

Life skills camps

A camp of several days' duration, such as a summer camp, creates an intensive learning environment, where participants can learn together in a supportive atmosphere. A camp gives participants plenty of time to interact and exchange experiences. They also have the opportunity of practising skills outside the sessions. Camps are a great way of launching a new programme focussing on life skills. But it is important to ensure that participants will continue practising the skills after the camp has finished and apply what they have learned in their daily lives.



Nino Shiradze/Georgia Red Cross Society

Weekend workshops

A weekend workshop gathers participants together, giving them an opportunity to learn and assimilate life skills in a safe setting. This option is good if participants struggle with the same issues, if they come from distant locations and if they come from different walks of life. The Swedish Red Cross, for example, hosts weekends for families who have lost a family member to suicide. Sessions are scheduled in flexible ways, including large groups and small groups in different combinations of participants.



Five-day camp brings changes

A needs assessment in Bangladesh indicated that the group facilitators in a women's empowerment programme needed life skills training. The trainer structured a training around a five-day camp, based on the needs identified in the assessment. The training included energizers that were focused on life skills themselves. For example, cognitive skills such as analysing a situation and solving problems were featured. Personal skills such as self-awareness and confidence were included as well. Interpersonal skills such as listening, communicating assertively and cooperating were also used. Participants were encouraged to write a note every time they felt they did something well to increase their awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses and to improve their self-esteem. In one exercise, participants drew an outline of their foot and wrote a goal on it which they wished to achieve. As they worked towards their goal during the camp, they gradually filled the drawing with colour.



Regular sessions

Daily, bi-weekly or weekly sessions are suitable for life skills programmes where, for example, structuring time is helpful for beneficiaries in rebuilding shattered lives after emergencies. Regular sessions also give participants opportunities to apply new skills and to monitor progress over a sustained period of time.

Structuring a series of sessions

The starting point for structuring a series of sessions is the needs assessment. Chapters 3 and 4 explain in detail how the findings of the needs assessment feed into programme planning and design. Programme objectives guide the implementation of the programme. They take account of financial, technical and logistical resources, as well as assets and resources in the communities. Ultimately, they represent the changes that beneficiaries say will improve their situation.

Series of sessions

In most cases, a life skills session will be part of a series, which has an overall goal for the whole life skills programme. Each session builds on skills mastered in the previous session; new skills are learned and the newly acquired ones continue to be practised. Sessions usually begin with a short recap, asking participants questions like, “What did we do last time?” “Does anyone have anything to say about the last session?” “Does anyone want to report back on how they used their listening skills over the last week?”

Planning

When planning a series of sessions, consider these questions:

- What skills are the focus of the training?
- What are the overall learning goals?
- What natural progression could be followed in learning the skills?
- What is the overarching theme of the whole programme?
- What are the expectations of stakeholders and of participants?
- Who are the participants and what is their level of life skills?
- How can the participation of all groups in the community be ensured?
- What is a convenient time and place to meet?

It is helpful to have the same format for each session in a series. This creates a familiar, safe learning environment. Each session builds on the previous one in a natural sequence, beginning with general topics and then going into more specific themes. Sessions are progressively oriented towards integrating skills into everyday life. A series on conflict resolution, for example, could begin with learning to listen, then learning to listen for facts and to separate facts from emotion, and then the third session could be about negotiation skills.



Clara Rubin



Life skills workshops for children

The *Children's Resilience Programme: Psychosocial support in and out of schools* features a series of 20 life skills workshops for children that can be combined in various ways, plus four sessions for parents and caregivers. The pre-planned tracks focus on the challenges faced by children who have been affected by abuse and exploitation, armed conflict, disaster and by high rates of HIV and AIDS in their communities. There are two choices for the final workshops.

This is the series of workshops that focus on protection from abuse and exploitation:

	Workshop number and name	Theme
1.	Getting acquainted	Getting acquainted and working together
2.	My life	To give the children an opportunity to share details about their lives and their support networks with each other, and in this way get to know each other better
3.	Our community	To explore, as a group, the community the children live in, encouraging them to identify problems and strengths in the community
4. a.	Children's rights	To discuss children's rights, and children's lives and roles in their community
OR		
4. b.	Children's needs	To discuss children's needs, and children's lives and roles in their community
5. a.	Children in our community – children's rights	To further raise awareness of children's rights and explore the life of children in the community
OR		
5. b.	Children in our community – children's needs	To further raise awareness of children's needs and explore the life of children in the community
6.	What is child abuse?	Identifying different kinds of child abuse and sources of help for child abuse experiences
7.	My body is mine – good touches and bad touches	Learning skills to set personal boundaries to protect oneself from risks and experiences of abuse
8.	My body is mine – protecting ourselves from abuse	Special focus on sexual abuse and bullying
9.	'Protecting ourselves from abuse' messages	
10.	Sexual abuse, grooming and perpetrators	
11.	Normal reactions to abnormal events	Understanding feelings and reactions to difficult experiences and learning how to deal with intrusive memories
12.	Feelings change	
13.	Bullying	Exploring the meaning of friendship and addressing the issue of bullying
14.	Trusting my friends	
15.	More on trust	Raising awareness of the importance of trust in friendships



Structure of each workshop

Every workshop follows the same format. For example, all the workshops have the same opening and closing activities:

Opening activity: Recap, feedback and introduction

Aim: To recap on the last workshop, give feedback on evaluation and introduce the aim of today's workshop.

1. Ask a volunteer to recap what you did together in the last workshop. If he or she does not remember all the activities, ask others to help until all the activities have been mentioned.
2. Give the children feedback on their evaluations from last time. Use this opportunity to discuss any activities that the children did not like. Note this in your monitoring notes.
3. Praise the children and remind them how important it is that they give honest evaluations, highlighting that it helps you to plan workshops that meet their needs.
4. Introduce the aim of the workshop using the script in each workshop.
5. Answer any questions and then begin the workshop.

Closing activity: Our song

Aim: To sing a song that all children are familiar with and that encourages a sense of belonging and cultural pride.

1. Ask the children to stand up, and ask them to sing the song they chose at the end of the last workshop.
2. They can either sing the song like last time, or use some of the ideas given in the workshop to vary how the song is sung.

Closing activity: Workshop evaluation

Aim: To evaluate the workshop.

Use small pieces of paper and writing materials and flipchart with smiley faces. Collect the evaluations and keep them for monitoring purposes, and to evaluate if changes or adaptations are needed for activities that are already planned. Make sure to follow up on the results of the evaluation at the beginning of the next workshop.

1. Explain what you have been doing in the workshop today using the script in each workshop.
2. Show the children the flipchart with the smiley faces again and give every child a small piece of paper and ask them to draw the smiley face that represents how they feel about today's workshop activities. Tell them they should NOT write their names on the paper. This will encourage honesty in their evaluation.
3. When they have finished, thank them for their feedback and take time to wish every child goodbye. This helps them feel recognized and appreciated.

IFRC Centre for Psychosocial Support and Save the Children. *The Children's Resilience Programme: Psychosocial support in and out of schools. Facilitator handbook 2. Workshop tracks.* Copenhagen, 2012.





8-step model for structuring a life skills session

This 8-step model can help structure the content and running of a life skills session. Facilitators may want to change the sequence of the steps or maybe omit a particular step. It is best to keep steps 1 and 8, and to use the other steps in a flexible way. The time allocated is 90 minutes, but this can be adapted to suit other time frames. If at all possible, relate icebreakers and energizers to the theme of the session. Included here is an example using assertive behaviour as the theme:

1. Introductions and icebreaker 10 minutes

Welcome participants and introduce the facilitators. Make sure everyone is introduced so that participants know the name of everyone present in the session. Orient participants to the content and goals of the session. Use an icebreaker as a fun and interactive way to begin the session.

Ground rules

Participants and facilitators agree upon ground rules when they meet for the first time. Ground rules set a framework ensuring safe and respectful dialogue and effective participation. Use flipchart paper to write up the rules and invite participants to sign their name on the paper to show they are willing to observe the rules. Ground rules might include: "We do not interrupt each other," "Mobiles are always on silent," or "We participate actively in the session." Stick the ground rules up on the wall for everyone to see. Check in with participants from time to time about how the ground rules are working.

2. Introducing the topic 10 minutes

Introduce the session by brainstorming associations with the topic. Brainstorming allows participants to generate ideas, identify factors contributing to a problem, as well as suggesting solutions. A useful way of doing a brainstorm is to ask participants to write down their ideas individually before starting the activity. That way everyone gets a chance to formulate their thoughts. Summarize the information, asking clarifying questions to encourage participants to reflect more about the theme.

3. Information input and exercise 15 minutes

Do a brief presentation on the life skills being featured in the session. Describe the life skill and ask participants for examples of how it helps to promote psychosocial well-being. Ask participants to





think about how it is related to other life skills they know. How can it be used? When would it be useful? Is there anything to be careful about when using this skill?

During the presentation, relate what participants said during the brainstorm and encourage interaction. End this section by doing a verbal or non-verbal exercise. For example, doing a role play gives participants the opportunity to begin to practise the skills that have been talked about. Make sure to discuss the role play afterwards to integrate the life skills learned.

4. Energizer 5 minutes

Introduce the energizer – or ask a participant to do so. Choosing energizers related to the topic can be a fun way for participants to learn.

5. Thematic exercise highlighting personal experience 15 minutes

Ask participants for examples of situations where they think the skill can be used. Introduce the exercise and divide everyone into small groups. Using these situations, ask participants to apply the life skill they have been learning about. Indicate how long they have for this exercise. Afterwards, ask the groups a couple of questions for reflection: “What did you observe or notice in yourself or the others in your group?” “What did you experience during the exercise?”

6. Plenary 15 minutes

Bring the whole group together and lead a group discussion based on feedback from the groups. “What was it like to do the exercise?” “How did it relate to everyday life?” “What did you talk about when you discussed the exercise afterwards?”

7. Next step 10 minutes

The participants go back to their small groups to discuss how they will use the life skill in a real life situation. If time allows, have each group do role plays where they try out the skill in the situation.

8. Ending the session 10 minutes

End in a way that lets participants feel that the workshop has been rounded off. One option is to end the session with a short recap. This allows participants to check what they have understood, as well as to ensure that all points have been covered adequately. Ask questions like, “What do you understand by (name life skill)?” “What did we learn?” “What was useful?”

Give participants time to give feedback on the session. This can be done by asking participants to note their own learning points, or using a participatory exercise with the whole group (see an example on p. 98 in chapter 6). Written feedback can be collected from the group too – ask participants to write one good thing and one thing that can be improved. Sometimes it can be useful to assign a homework task to practise skills learned in the session.

Assertive behaviour

Assertiveness training is a component of many life skills programmes. Participants learn to know what they want, how to communicate in a way that is respectful of themselves and others, and to stand up for their rights without violating the rights of others.

1. Introductions and icebreaker 10 minutes

Welcome participants to the session. Present facilitator(s) and the organization and its goals. Explain the aim of the session, e.g. “We have invited you today to participate in a session on assertive behaviour with a focus on asking and negotiating for needs and rights.”

Link the theme of the session to the previous one, and ask if participants have practised any life skills since the last session. Remind participants of the ground rules and be sure to mention that what is said in the sessions is confidential and will stay in the room.



Darsih Youth Council (DUF)

Ask participants to introduce themselves, if they don't know everyone's names. Use an icebreaker to do this. The icebreaker can be linked to the theme of the session by asking participants to say their name in an assertive way.

2. Introducing the theme 10 minutes

Begin with a brainstorm by asking participants to take a minute to think about what it means to behave assertively. Ask participants to pair with a neighbour and talk about what behaving assertively means to them. After a few minutes, bring everyone together in the large group again and ask them, "What does it mean to behave assertively?" Invite a participant to note responses on a flipchart.

Summarize what has been said and check if there is anything else to add. "You have mentioned many important aspects of behaving assertively." (Name some examples from the flipchart.) "Behaving assertively means asking for what you need in a way that respects others and yourself. Behaving assertively means standing up for your own rights and at the same time respecting the rights of others. Anything else we should add?"

3. Information input and exercise 15 minutes

Introduce the exercise. "In everyday life we find ourselves in situations where we need to ask for something or negotiate for something. Sometimes we are successful. Sometimes we find ourselves struggling. Let's experiment with how many different ways we have in asking or negotiating for something we need or want."

Ask the group to get into pairs. Have the pairs decide who will be A and who will be B. Ask A to grab any small item such as a pen or a book and hold on to it. The item represents something B wants very much.

Explain that participant A must hold onto the item, saying no to almost every request from B, who will try asking for the item, using all the strategies he or she can think of.

Before beginning the exercise, have A and B think for a moment. How will B ask for the item and how will A say no and what could persuade A to give the item away? Ask participants to begin and tell them they have three minutes. The sign to end will be the facilitator clapping their hands.

Ask the pairs to discuss the experience using questions written on a flipchart:

- What ways did B use to ask for the item?
- Are these the same B uses in daily life when he/she wants something from others?
- How was it for A to say no to the different approaches used by B?
- If A gave the item to B, what made A decide to give the item away?

End the exercise by asking the group to think about useful strategies for asking and negotiating. "Let's reflect together. What, in general, are good strategies to obtain something you need?" Note down the strategies on a flipchart and make sure that all the following are included: remaining calm, asking in a socially accepted and respectful way, giving your reasons and understanding the other person's perspective. If some of these strategies are missing, talk about them and add them to the flipchart.

4. Energizer 5 minutes

Have participants walk around the room or meeting space; ask them to mill around and make sure they use the entire space available. First ask participants to walk in an assertive way where they make space for others and themselves. Ask them to make a mental note of how this feels. Then ask participants to walk in a non-assertive way,

i.e. shyly, where the only concern is to make space for others. “Don’t think about yourself; keep out of the way of other people.... Continue to walk like this and notice how this affects you.” Now ask participants to walk in a bold and aggressive way. “Walk as if you are only thinking about yourself and don’t even consider the needs of others. Notice how this is for you.” End the energizer by asking participants to walk around with their partner from the previous exercise for a minute. Ask them to share their thoughts from the exercise with one another. Ask for a few comments about the exercise for the whole group to hear.

5. Thematic exercise highlighting personal experience 15 minutes

Ask participants to form groups of three. Give the groups two minutes to think of situations in their daily lives, where it might be difficult to ask or negotiate for something regarding their needs or their rights. Ask the groups to choose one situation they will role play. Ask the groups to decide who will play the role of asking or negotiating, who will be responding and who will observe. Walk around while the groups role-play to get an idea about what participants’ concerns are.

6. Plenary 15 minutes

Ask participants to sit in a circle, making space in the middle for a demonstration. Ask a group to show their role play. Lead a discussion on what the group did well in asking or negotiating for a need or right. If possible, link this to the main concerns in the daily lives of participants.

7. Next steps 10 minutes

Ask participants to go back to their groups of three and discuss their next steps in trying to ask or negotiate for their needs or rights. Ask them to focus on using skills in easy life situations, before progressing to more challenging situations. Spend the last few minutes to have a few groups report on their planned next steps. Caution anyone who suggests doing too much too soon. The key to success is to begin with small steps.

8. Ending the session 10 minutes

Ask participants to sit for a moment and reflect about what they learned in the session. Ask how they will use these assertiveness skills in daily life.

Gather feedback from participants either verbally or in writing. Ask if anyone has anything more to say before the end.

Before participants leave, remind them that everything that has been disclosed in the group is confidential.

Invite participants to the next session!



Penille Hansen

Life skills facilitation

Facilitating life skills activities calls for a range of skills on the part of the facilitator. Remember that the role of a facilitator is to guide and direct a group in a neutral and fair way without imposing personal views.

If two or more facilitators are working as a team, they should decide in advance who will take on which role in the sessions. Sometimes it makes sense for a facilitator to be the lead person for a particular activity, for example, or for an experienced person to support participants with special needs.

Confidentiality

Participants must feel safe knowing that confidentiality is respected. Everyone must be assured that whatever they disclose in the training will remain private and confidential. Protect anonymity when using cases based on participants' own lives, so that no one will feel exposed. Make sure to include confidentiality in ground rules and repeat it at the beginning and end of each session.



Ea Suzanne Akasha

Time management

Time keeping is part of earning the trust of a group and creating a safe learning environment. Keep time in a gentle way and only go beyond planned time limits after consultation with the group.

Listen to responses

Listen sensitively to what is being said and focus on the participant who is speaking. Maintain eye contact and show that you are listening by having an open posture, nod-

ding, etc. Do not interrupt, but watch for signals indicating someone else might want to respond. It is important to acknowledge responses with encouragement, and to reinforce what is right in incomplete answers. Use diplomacy with incorrect answers. Ask other participants if they agree: "Do you agree with this? Do you share the same feelings or opinion? Does anybody have anything to add?"

Answering questions

Facilitators are usually asked a lot of questions. It is important to take all questions seriously so that nobody feels ignored or silly. A facilitator should not be put off if a question is difficult, but can try to clarify what the person really wants to know. Try to work out if there is a question or an opinion behind the question. Confirm or clarify the question if necessary. Direct the question to other participants if it is appropriate; someone might be able to provide a good answer. When answering, take time to formulate a response, and try to make the answer relevant for everyone.

Time for all

Make sure all participants are given equal opportunity to respond, and no one participant dominates. Take care that no group predominates based on gender, ethnic background,

position or age, etc. It may be necessary to ask someone to wait until others have spoken to let more participants have their say.

Don't be afraid to stop participants who may be monopolising discussions. Say: "I am sorry to cut you short, but we have to move on." Or, "I would like to invite someone else to give their view." Or, "I think it is time we had some input from other participants."

Record relevant information

Write key words and concepts on flipchart paper and leave it up for the session to keep a focus on the topic and so that participants can refer back to it.

Adapt to needs

Always adapt activities to participant needs and be ready to be flexible in how the session is organized. If an activity seems too confrontational or difficult, then adapt it to enable the group to participate in a positive way. For example, if some participants struggle with literacy, adapt activities accordingly. Sometimes actual events may be occupying participants' minds, so that they cannot focus on the session. For example, if a fight broke out in their neighbourhood the previous night, it would make sense to set time aside to talk about it before going on with the session.

Time out

Offer participants the option of withdrawing from any activity if they feel uneasy. If they need to leave the room, make sure they have support. If at all possible, have a female facilitator or volunteer accompany a female participant.

Group work and plenary

When assigning group work to participants, make sure the task and time frame is understood. Explain how the group work will be fed back to the large group afterwards. Circulate among groups, ask questions and monitor their progress. Moderate discussion for the plenary, focusing the group on the theme and keeping the session on time. Draw the discussion to a conclusion, inviting input from participants.

Positive feedback

Developing and supporting personal skills, competencies and the ability to reflect about learning are important aspects of the facilitator's role. Give positive feedback to encourage participants to reflect openly. Be respectful when participants talk about struggles and challenges, as well as their successes and progress. Working positively through challenges and struggles helps in strengthening resilience.

Parking lot

Issues may sometimes be raised or questions asked that are important, but difficult to deal with. It may simply not be a suitable time. In this situation a facilitator can say: "That's a very interesting question. Could someone write it on the flipchart please, and then we can deal with it later? Now let's get back to the issue we were discussing."

The issues raised can be noted on a 'parking lot' flipchart on the wall. The group can then come back to them later. This will ensure that nothing is forgotten.

Key reference materials

IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support. *Community-based Psychosocial Support: A training kit*. Copenhagen, 2009.

IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support. *Psychosocial Interventions: A handbook*. Copenhagen, 2009.

IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support and Save the Children. *The Children's Resilience Programme: Psychosocial support in and out of schools*. Copenhagen, 2012.

IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support. *Lay Counselling. A Trainer's Manual*. Copenhagen, 2012.

IFRC. *Sexual, Reproductive Health and Life Skills for Youth Peer Education. A Guide for Trainers of Facilitators*. Johannesburg, 2010.

Monitoring and evaluating life skills programmes



CHAPTER

6

Monitoring and evaluating life skills programmes

Monitoring and evaluation life skills programmes describes the way that facilitators and coordinators can document progress and development and ensure that programmes are fulfilling objectives. The chapter looks first at how monitoring is done and details documenting inputs, outputs and outcomes. Various methods and tools are given and examples provided from the field. The section on evaluation explains how activities can be evaluated at the midpoint and at the end of the programme. Guidance on evaluating how to assess whether the programme has had the desired impact is provided. The framework for monitoring and evaluation on p. 107 summarises the chapter.

The evaluation chain

The process of change depends on each link in the chain of the programme. In a youth empowerment programme, for example, aiming to enable young people to speak up for themselves, the process of change starts with the young people being aware that speaking up is difficult for them. Then they need to learn what to say and how to deal with the stress of speaking up and have the courage to do so. When they have learned to do this in a safe environment, the next step is to practise what they have learned in a real situation.

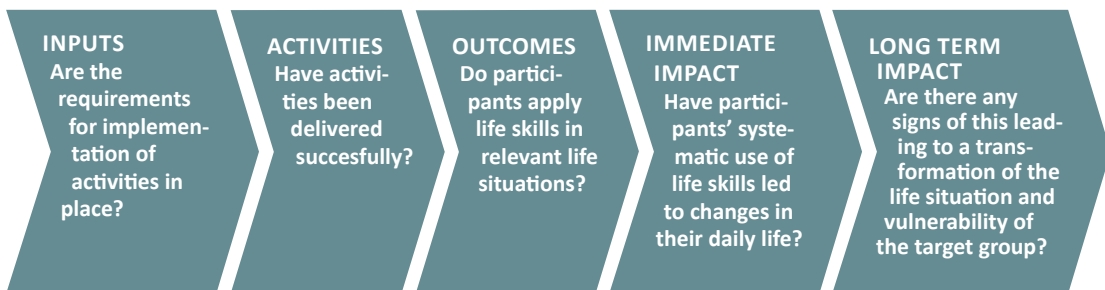


The process then continues, as the young people build up their confidence in speaking up in their daily lives.

The evaluation chain follows this process of change, beginning with inputs. Evaluation assesses whether all the requirements have been put in place to enable the programme to be implemented. This includes recruitment of skilled facilitators, procurement of equipment, materials prepared, etc. The next link in the chain relates to outputs. Questions here include: “Have the planned number of workshops been held?” and “Have the planned number of participants been trained?” Outputs are aimed to lead to outcomes such as enhanced skills and changed behaviours, for example, in terms of self-confidence or the ability to cope with stress. An evaluation would look at whether participants have been able to apply new skills in relevant life situations. For the example given above, this chain of change should lead to the realization of the immediate impact – that young people are able to speak up for themselves in the situations they face. The final link in the evaluation chain would look at the long-term impact of the programme on young people’s lives. For example, have youth been empowered to take on new roles and responsibilities within their communities?

The evaluation chain shows the importance of monitoring and evaluating each link of the chain. One weak link would cause difficulties in meeting programme objectives and supporting change in participants’ lives.

The evaluation chain



It is important to find appropriate tools for assessing all the links in the evaluation chain. Tools are needed to gather relevant information about programme indicators. The indicators set at the planning stage (see chapter 4) define what changes are being aimed at, and are therefore used for monitoring and evaluation too. Take for example the indicator “the number of conflicts that escalate into violence” for a programme focussing on anger management to prevent violence. A self-assessment questionnaire asking participants for their views could be used to measure this, along with data from the police or other stakeholders involved in violence reduction. Tools and methods for monitoring and evaluation should always be tailored to the specific programme. (See section below for more information.)

Do no harm

Do no harm is a basic principle for successful life skills programmes. It cautions against the unintentional harm that may be caused to those who are supposed to benefit from any intervention. This principle applies to monitoring and evaluation, as well as planning and implementation. It means, for example, that assessments should be carried out in a safe environment, respecting confidentiality and ensuring no stigmatization for participants.

Monitoring life skills programmes

Monitoring is the regular process of collecting information to measure progress and development. This ensures that the programme is on track, making it possible to adjust activities if necessary.

1. Documenting inputs

The first step in monitoring is documenting whether the required inputs are in place, as planned. This is important and is a precondition to implementation. The programme plan includes all required inputs and this provides the basis for the monitoring process. For example, a children's resilience programme involving life skills sessions and play activities will need equipment such as balls, ropes, crayons and drawing books. All these need to be documented along with other inputs such as finances, logistics and personnel.

Verifying inputs:

- Bank transfer notes of release of funds
- Order requests
- Receipts of procured items
- Programme asset lists
- Documentation of distribution of required assets to managers, facilitators or beneficiaries
- Terms of reference for facilitators
- Contact information for facilitators

Verifying outputs:

- Total number of sessions, trainings, workshops, community activities, etc.
- Programme documents including session plans, training manual, etc.
- Minutes from meetings with stakeholders
- Participants' names and contact information
- Demographics, e.g. gender, age, etc.
- Attendance lists*
- Copies of handouts, posters, etc. used in activities
- Photos taken of activities

*Attendance lists can be useful for spotting patterns of attendance. If someone is not attending regularly or if certain days generally seem to be less convenient to the whole group than others, then changes in programming might be considered.

2. Documenting outputs

Monitoring outputs documents the 'deliverables,' i.e. what has been carried out and to what extent these meet the set objectives. This includes the number of participants, for example, students enrolled in vocational training, and the number of life skills workshops held or advocacy radio talk shows presented. Programme plans have indicators for all outputs (see chapter 4).

This kind of monitoring should be integrated into the implementation process. A system should be set up to record and store all the information. These records can then be used both for on-going monitoring and for evaluation purposes. It is crucial that information is recorded uniformly by all facilitators and across different locations. Programme coordinators should ensure that simple, uniform reporting templates are developed at the beginning of the programme, and that the information is gathered and stored centrally when appropriate.

3. Documenting outcomes

Documenting outcomes is concerned with the immediate effects in participants' lives that have come about as a result of a life skills programme. Outcomes therefore look at changes in participants' knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours. The four steps below can help define and decide what questions to ask and how to assess the outcomes of a life skills intervention or programme.



Jérôme Grimaud



Step 1: Use the programme plan

Define an issue to focus upon (whether assessing knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviours or a combination of these), using the learning objectives and targeted outcomes in the programme plan or log frame. For example, in a life skills programme about stress management, a targeted outcome could be to deal effectively with critical stress in others.

Step 2: Formulate assessment questions

Based on step 1 and the issue that has been focused on, use the indicators defined at the planning stage for learning objectives or targeted outcomes to formulate questions to assess whether outcomes have been achieved or not. For example, indicators may state that 'participants can identify key symptoms of critical stress and know ways to respond.' The questions related to these indicators would therefore ask participants to identify key symptoms and potential strategies to deal with them.

Step 3: Develop criteria

Define the levels of knowledge, skills, attitude or behaviour that need to be demonstrated to indicate that targeted change has occurred and how they will be measured. In the example above, criteria would list which symptoms should be noted by participants and also what strategies they should use when dealing with these symptoms.

Step 4: Choose a relevant assessment tool or method

There are many different tools and methods that can be used for assessment. In the example given above about stress management, this could be done through a questionnaire or in an interview. Whatever tools or methods are used, it is crucial to do everything in an ethical manner. This means gaining consent, ensuring confidentiality, clarifying aims and procedures, and offering support if the assessment process causes distress.

Life skills programmes lead to new skills that can improve daily life, and assessments need to capture elements of this. New skills grow out of daily experiences and develop over time in interaction with others. They are best assessed over time during the course of a programme and at the end of the programme. During implementation, outcomes can be monitored through documented examples of changes in behaviours and attitudes, in reactions and in the ability to reflect. This can be done as part of the daily activities or be a planned separate activity. Staff and volunteers need to be tuned into the importance of recording their observations. They can make up their own system for making notes during and after each activity.

Most assessment has a mixed method approach using qualitative (focussed on describing) and quantitative (focussed on numbers) methods of collecting information. Qualitative methods include focus groups, individual interviews and self-assessment. Quantitative methods include questionnaires and surveys, project records and statistics, etc.

Communication strategy monitors success stories

An NGO in Sri Lanka wrote a communication strategy for a life skills programme. The programme staff decided that they wanted to communicate progress and success by regularly publishing articles and promoting the programme in the media. Quarterly staff meetings always included an agenda item for potential stories for publication. This strategy raised staff and volunteers' awareness of what was going well in the programme, and created a positive circle for everyone in the programme. Staff, volunteers and beneficiaries all felt a sense of pride in what they were achieving and this enhanced ownership of the programme.



Benoit Matsha-Carpentier/IFRC

Methods for measuring outcomes

Changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour can be difficult to measure. Methods such as written tests, participant feedback, observation and interviews or discussions with key people in participants' networks can be useful.

Written tests

Written tests can be used to measure participants' level of knowledge, skills, behaviour and attitudes before and after life skills programmes. The questions in the tests focus on key learning points covered in the activities.

Participant feedback

Programme participants reflect on their own development in relation to the life skills programme. This can be done as a group or individually. For example, the facilitator asks the whole group to think about situations where they have responded differently than before during a relevant period. The group then discusses the experiences everyone has had. Other methods include asking participants to make a drawing of how they relate to their surroundings before and now, or to write a list of achievements they have made in a recent period.

Observation

Observing participants in their interactions with other people within the programme and with other community members, where this is possible, enables facilitators to see development and growth. Facilitators can observe changes in skills and behaviour during programme activities, as well as in action taken by participants such as enrolling in an educational or community-based activity.

Discussions with key people

People close to programme participants can be a valuable source of information in needs assessments, monitoring and evaluations. They engage with them on a day-to-day basis and can observe reactions and responses in a wide range of situations. An initial session with caregivers, parents, teachers, etc. can be followed up by a mid-term session, where they are consulted on how they experience the progression in outcomes of the programme. This also provides an opportunity for them to get a better understanding of the activities, and can be a platform to talk about potential changes that they experience in daily interactions.



Examples from the field

The aim of today's session is to....

A life skills programme for children and their families was implemented in the Caucasus in an area affected by civil war. Staff and volunteers asked for more information about dealing with critical stress – their own and the stress they saw in beneficiaries. They had found that stress reactions sometimes threw everyone out of balance. A psychosocial delegate was visiting the area and offered to give a one-day workshop about the difference between distress and critical stress, on how to deal with critical stress in oneself and how to deal with critical stress in others.

At the beginning of each session, the purpose of the session and activities were clearly described and then written up on a flipchart. At the end of each session, participants discussed the activities and gave their feedback. The collective reflection in the group discussion helped participants understand. Having a clear purpose at the beginning of each session and feedback at the end made evaluating the three sessions very straightforward.

Pre- and post-tests

An assessment was done in a life skills session on reproductive health for adolescents, where facilitators included a pre- and post-test. Questions to do with knowledge (meaning what participants understood and had learned) included knowing how HIV is transmitted, for example. Questions to do with skills (meaning participants' abilities to carry out certain behaviours) included being able to communicate assertively when faced with pressure to have sexual intercourse, for example. Questions about attitudes included motivation to engage in healthy behaviour, for example. Questions about behaviour (meaning what would participants actually do when confronted with decisions in their life) included whether there was consistent use of condoms, for example.

Planning skills for the future

A programme aiming at strengthening teenage girls' empowerment and livelihood opportunities stressed planning for the future as a key skill. One session focused on the opportunities and challenges teenage girls face in realizing their dreams. One important aspect described by the teenage girls was the impact that having children at a young age had on educational opportunities and income development. During the session participants discussed when they would ideally have a child. Topics like family planning, control over one's own life, and dependency on one's future husband were discussed. At the end of the session, participants were asked how they could influence the timing of having children. They were asked to elaborate on their answers and whether anything had changed in how they looked at things now. Facilitators recorded the answers. This exercise was repeated at the end of the whole programme. This information was then used to document cognitive learning.

Outcomes in a children's resilience programme

A children's resilience programme in Asia aims to improve children's emotional well-being and playfulness and to increase their ability to listen and cooperate. Facilitators use a questionnaire to assess outcomes including the following:

Hisashi Hasegawa/Japan Red Cross Society





Playfulness

- Number of children showing spontaneous interest and initiative in the activities
- Number of children actively engaged in activities
- Number of children indicating engagement, demonstrated in body language, imitation, repetition of activities, etc.

Listening skills

- Number of children showing support for the feelings of other children in the group
- Number of children listening to other children in the group
- Number of children accepting the opinions of others, even if it differs from their personal opinions

Cooperation skills

- Number of children who cooperate with other children
- Number of children who are patient and let others have their turn
- Number of children participating in arranging the room for the workshop

Aggression

- Number of children physically aggressive against other children
- Number of children making fun of or cursing at other children in the workshop
- Number of children dealing aggressively with the workshop material

Evaluating life skills programmes

Life skills evaluation aims to establish whether implemented life skills activities and programmes have succeeded in achieving their objectives. It can be done at the mid-term point and at the end of a life skills programme. When done at the mid-term point, evaluation ensures that activities are being implemented with quality, relevance and effect. When done at the end of a life skills programme, evaluation looks at whether the programme has made a difference in participants' lives. It also provides information for the implementing organization in developing and improving programming.

1. Mid-term review

Evaluation at the mid-term has two aspects. The first looks inward at the quality of service delivery and the second looks outward to consider external changes that potentially impact participants' lives.

The first aspect assesses the quality of service delivery, looking at the capacity of the organization to provide the programme activities. The mid-term evaluation gathers information from participants about what works and what could be improved. Integrating feedback mechanisms into all activities is very important in making adjustments in the course of programme implementation. This helps to create a culture of openness, as long as facilitators and staff receive feedback positively and utilize it constructively.

The second aspect looks at the programme design in terms of the external context and the needs of programme participants. When activities have been running for some time, the strengths and weaknesses of a programme become visible. The mid-term evaluation provides detailed information on which changes can be made to improve and adapt the programme to the context.

Agenda for programme meetings

Regular programme meetings with staff and programme coordinators should include elements of monitoring and evaluation, where practical challenges, organizational issues and best practices are shared and analysed. This helps in making adjustments and improvements in the programme. The agenda can include:

- Confirming that practical and financial inputs are in place
- Presenting examples of change in knowledge, attitudes and behaviour among the participants in the activities conducted
- Sharing feedback from participants
- Reporting on attendance in the period and identifying possible external reasons for absences
- Discussing what has worked well
- Identifying challenges and how to deal with them
- Considering the impact of external events on implementation
- Sharing feedback on the impact of activities on staff and volunteers
- Checking on support mechanisms for staff and volunteers.

Based on the discussions, a list of action points can be made indicating the time frame for each action and who is responsible for it. The next meeting can then begin with reporting back on the action points.





Participatory feedback

After a session on normal reactions to stress and symptoms of trauma in a conflict-affected area, a group of 25 participants were invited to give their feedback. The facilitators explained that the space between one end of the room and the other represented the range from 'very positive' to 'very negative'. Facilitators asked the participants to evaluate each activity in turn by placing themselves on the line representing their experience. For the first activity, a role play about two villages in conflict, participants clustered at the very positive end of the line. In response to the second activity, a session about stress and trauma, the participants were spread out along the line. Facilitators asked participants at the extreme ends and in the centre why they had chosen to stand there. One person at the negative end of the line said, "This was too difficult for me. It reminded me of what happened to me, and now I cannot stop thinking about it." This feedback indicated that that particular person needed support before they left the session. The facilitators realized they needed to be more aware of who needed more support to feel safe and not to push themselves during the sessions. They wanted to ensure that no unintended harm resulted from programme activities.



Gathering feedback

Methods for gathering feedback include:

- Drawings or other creative ways of expressing experiences
- Suggestion box
- Mood-o-meter
- Participatory feedback activities at the end of the session
- Time with facilitators after each session.

Facilitators can report on this feedback at monthly coordination meetings.



Checklist for mid-term review

Verify inputs

- Are the required human resources in place? Have facilitators, staff and volunteers been adequately trained? Are all still part of the team or should new team members be identified?
- Are practical inputs to conduct activities available at the time of implementation?
- Are financial transfers timely?
- Are the locations for activities available, adequate and safe?
- Do facilitators, staff and volunteers take part in activities that are provided for their support and well-being?
- If relevant, is transport available so that implementation can take place?

Summarize outputs

- How many participants have been trained? How many workshops held, etc.?
- Do outputs meet targets set?
- What feedback is available at this stage?
- What challenges have been raised by participants and stakeholders?

Review meeting with implementers

- What achievements have been made so far?
- What are the strengths of the programme?
- How has cooperation been within the programme?
- What challenges have arisen?
- How can implementation be improved?
- Which best practices should be shared?
- What unexpected outcomes have occurred?

Review meeting with selected participants

- Are activities relevant to daily life?
- How are relationships between facilitators, staff, volunteers and other participants?
- What positive experiences have you had since attending?



Nana Wiedenmann

- Have you had any negative experiences since attending?
- Are there any obstacles to regular participation in activities?
- Is there anything that should be added to the activities?
- What can improve the programme?

Revise context analysis and needs assessment

- Have any significant events affected the working context?
- What are the current needs among the target group? Have the needs changed since the programme started?
- Have new stakeholders arrived since the programme started?
- Are there changes in the services available to the target group that should be disseminated to participants and/or included as a referral option?
- Have useful reports been published about the context and target group?

Plan for improvement

- How do review findings translate into recommendations for the remaining implementation period?
- Which adjustments should be made?
- Do adjustments have implications for the budget?
- Who is responsible for the implementation of the adjustments?
- When and how should adjustments be incorporated in implementation?



2. Evaluation at the end of programmes

“Are we making a difference?” is a key question at the end of a programme. Evaluation at this point usually looks at the immediate impact of the programme. Its purpose is to establish whether life skills activities have led to changes in participants’ coping, planning and psychosocial well-being. Evaluation of the long-term impact of programmes looks at the lasting change in the lives of individuals, families, communities and the broader environment that results from a programme.

Immediate impact

Determining the immediate impact of a programme depends on finding out what has changed as a result of the programme and whether the activities in the programme have had the desired effect.

Baseline

The most reliable way to evaluate if a programme has reached its objectives is to have a baseline before the activities start. It is important to be consistent and measure the same life skills indicators from the beginning to the end of a programme. Sometimes changes will be needed as a result of a midterm review, for example. In this case, changes will be needed in the indicators. In most cases, the results from the needs assessment can be used as a baseline.

The same tools and methods from the needs assessment can be used in a final evaluation. The following questions are useful because they are generic and enable people to talk about the issues they want to raise:

- How do people in the community understand their own situation?
- How are they dealing with this situation?
- Do they know where to go for information?
- What do people need to do to act effectively in this situation?
- Do they know how to do it?
- Do they have vocational skills fit for the changed situation?



Naoki Shirouchi/Japan Red Cross Society

Where no baseline data is available for comparison, an attempt can be made to ask community members to reconstruct how the situation was before. This can be done by including questions about how things were before the programme began. This method is weaker than having a baseline, in that memories may not be very accurate.



Gathering information for evaluation

At the end of a programme, participants can evaluate their own learning in relation to the goals they set themselves in the beginning. Time is usually set aside for this at the end of the last session. In a youth empowerment life skills programme, for example, the following questions were used:

- Did you reach the target you set for yourself in the first session?
- If not, why not?
- What new life skills did you acquire in the sessions?
- How will you use these life skills?
- Did what you learned change your behaviour in any way?
- How will these life skills influence your daily life?
- Is there anything the facilitator can improve?
- Do you have any other comments or suggestions?

The young people were asked to give as many examples as possible. Their responses were given anonymously to encourage honest feedback.

This feedback is an important element for participants in reflecting on their own learning. But it is also useful for the final evaluation of the programme. It is part of the information that is gathered to measure the success of the programme. Life skills activities focus on the changes in knowledge, skills, attitude and behaviour, so a final evaluation should try to measure all of these to establish to what extent participants apply new skills in their daily life.

For example, a life skills programme on conflict management is rated by the extent to which participants demonstrate listening, negotiation and anger management skills. The programme is evaluated based on how well the participants are now able to listen and negotiate in situations that could escalate into violence. Information for the evaluation can be gathered over the course of the programme. For example, the facilitator can record examples of anger management or conflict resolution. This information can be kept for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

When there is no baseline

A needs assessment following a natural disaster showed that normal support structures and coping mechanisms had been disrupted. This had led to high levels of distress and a sense of loneliness. Most people had also suffered significant losses. A life skills programme was designed to strengthen coping, establish support networks and build hope in planning for the future. In order to determine whether the programme made a difference in the daily lives of the participants, information about coping mechanisms immediately after the crisis event and after the activities was needed. As no baseline had been done, questions about how the situation was before the disaster were included in the evaluation.



Evaluating a conflict management programme

A survey at the end of a conflict management programme indicated a change in the community's attitude towards incidents of household conflict and violence. The survey showed that neighbours now played a greater role and had stepped in as mediators in 80 per cent of cases of domestic violence. This information was validated, as incidents of conflict and their resolution had been monitored during implementation. The monitoring data confirmed the survey's findings and provided additional information about the positive role neighbours took in conflict management.

Most final evaluations use a combination of methods to gather information, including questionnaires, surveys, individual interviews and focus groups. Focus group discussions are useful in getting insights about how the programme has contributed to changes. Participants can be asked to give examples of what they do differently after having taken part in the activities. Questions are specific to the programme, the context and the target group. For a programme on problem solving and assertiveness in a post-conflict environment, the specific questions could be:

- Have activities been relevant to the issues you face?
- Is there a difference in the knowledge you have about how to plan for the future as compared to before?
- How do you compare your plans for the future before and after the programme?
- Do you do anything differently now related to planning for the future?
- Give examples of what you have achieved as a result of the programme.

If there are sufficient resources, focus groups could also be done with family members and caregivers, teachers, social workers, community leaders, etc. This could provide useful information about the way programme participants have applied the life skills they have been learning. Evaluation questions would need to be tailored to the different groups of people consulted and focus group members identified who have relevant perspectives.

Sampling

The Inter-Agency Guide to the Evaluation of Psychosocial Programming in Humanitarian Crises (p. 98-105) contains guidelines for sampling. A sample is a 'subset' which is representative of a whole population. It is important to work out how many people to include in your sample and how you will select the people who will be included so that the evaluation is not biased.

Involving networks and groups

In a programme on social protection in a refugee settlement, part of an evaluation was about the prevalence and causes of domestic and sexual violence. The evaluators found that the refugee community had a network of women groups working on this issue, and so these groups were consulted in focus group discussions before and after the programme. The network and community groups were therefore able to give information about the changes resulting from the social protection programme.

Analysing and interpreting information

The information gathered from different sources is collated, analysed and interpreted. Patterns and differences can be identified in the information and comparisons made from the baseline to the end point of the programme. It is good practice for this analysis to be done by more than one person. Interpreting whether the changes are due to the life skills programme itself or other events may be difficult. However, comparisons can be made with groups waiting for life skills programmes and who have experienced similar events. This provides a way to draw some conclusions about the changes brought about by the programme.

Using findings

Monitoring and evaluation provide information to develop and improve programming. Findings provide accountability to stakeholders, including those participating in the programme, the wider-affected community, the implementing organization, etc.

The following framework for monitoring and evaluation gives an overview of the process.

Framework for monitoring and evaluation

	Inputs	Outputs	Outcomes	Immediate impact	Long-term impact
Question	Have the requirements been in place at the right time and place?	Did the targeted number of participants complete the training?	Did the participants acquire targeted life skills?	Have participants applied life skills in their daily lives?	Have their use of life skills led to desired changes in personal and community psycho-social well-being?
Timing	Before activities as a quality assessment, and at end of implementation for evaluation and accountability	During and after activities	Monitored before, during and after implementation	Before and after implementation for comparison	Before and after implementation for comparison
Who is responsible?	Programme coordinator, facilitators	Facilitators	Facilitators and evaluation team	Facilitators, programme coordinator	Facilitators, programme coordinator, external evaluators
Methods	<p>Assessment of quality and existence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bank transfer notes of release of funds; • Order requests, • Receipts of procured items; • Programme asset list; • Documentation of distribution of required assets to recipients (managers, facilitators or beneficiaries); • Terms of Reference for facilitators; • List with names and contact information of facilitators. 	<p>Attendance lists;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photos of activities completed; • Monitoring records. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre- and post-test of factual knowledge (oral or written, depending on literacy of target group); • Recording of demonstrated examples of usage of new skills during activities; • Participant's self-assessment of changes in practices, attitude and behaviour in their daily life outside activities; • Facilitators' observations of changes in reflection and thinking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive evaluation using a baseline including: • Participatory development of indicators; • Questionnaire-based survey; • Focus group discussions with target group and stakeholders; • Assessment of changes as experienced by stakeholders close to beneficiaries; • Monitoring data; • Other reports. 	<p>Comprehensive evaluation using a baseline including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participatory development of indicators; • Questionnaire-based survey; • Focus group discussions with target group and stakeholders; • Assessment of changes as experienced by stakeholders close to beneficiaries; • Monitoring data; • Other reports.

Monitoring and evaluation are crucial in understanding whether programmes are having their intended benefits. As this chapter shows, this can be a challenging process, but it is important in identifying what participants have learned. Monitoring and evaluation also highlight any unintended harmful consequences, and help organizations to develop and improve their programming. For participants, facilitators, programme coordinators and partners, there is real benefit and encouragement in knowing progress is being made and that programmes are making a difference.

Key reference materials

IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support. *Psychosocial Interventions: A handbook*. Copenhagen, 2009.

UNICEF. *Inter-Agency Guide to the Evaluation of Psychosocial Programming in Humanitarian Crises*. New York, 2011.

Resources & Glossary



Resources

This is a list of resources for planning, implementing, and monitoring and evaluating life skills programmes. It is not exhaustive, but gives a sample of the materials and networks that are available including:

- Resources from the International Federation of Red Cross Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support (PS Centre)
- Resources on needs assessment and monitoring and evaluation
- Resources for developing activities
- Guidelines
- Forums and e-learning courses.

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support resources

IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support. *Rebuilding hope*. Film. Copenhagen, 2009.

IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support. *Community-based Psychosocial Support: A training kit*. Copenhagen, 2009.

IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support. *Psychosocial Interventions: A handbook*. Copenhagen, 2009.

IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support and Save the Children. *The Children's Resilience Programme: Psychosocial support in and out of schools*. Copenhagen, 2012.

IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support. *Caring for Volunteers: A psychosocial support toolkit*. Copenhagen, 2012.

IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support with the Danish Cancer Society, War Trauma Foundation, University of Innsbruck. *Lay Counselling. A Trainer's Manual*. Copenhagen, 2012.

IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support. *Children's Stress and Coping. Emergency Response Unit leaflet*.

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. *The road to resilience. Bridging relief and development for a more sustainable future*. Geneva, 2012.

Needs assessment

World Health Organization (WHO) and King's College London. *The Humanitarian Emergency Settings Perceived Needs Scale (HESPER): Manual with Scale*. Geneva, 2011.

World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). *Assessing Mental Health and Psychosocial Needs and Resources: Toolkit for Humanitarian Settings*. Geneva, 2012.

Monitoring and evaluation

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). *Inter-Agency Guide to the Evaluation of Psychosocial Programming in Humanitarian Crises*. New York, 2011.

Activity development

Peace Corps. *Life Skills Manual*. Washington, D.C., 2001.

Youth

The Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH). *Life Planning Skills: A Curriculum for Young People in Africa, Ghana Version. Facilitator's Manual*. Washington, D.C., 2003.

The International Federation of Red Cross Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). *Sexual, Reproductive Health and Life Skills for Youth Peer Education. A guide for Trainers of Facilitators*. Johannesburg, 2010.

The Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH). *Life Planning Skills: A Curriculum for Young People in Africa, Uganda Version. Facilitator's Manual*. Seattle, 2003.

The Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH). *Life Planning Skills: A Curriculum for Young People in Africa, Uganda Version. Participant's book*. Seattle, 2003.

Danish Red Cross Youth (DRCY) and Uganda Red Cross Society (URCS). *Life planning skills. A psychosocial annex for youth affected by conflict and war. Facilitators' manual*.

AED Center for Gender Equity. *Girls' Success: Mentoring Guide for Life Skills*. Washington, D.C., 2009.

Children and health

World Health Organization (WHO). *Skills for Health Skills-based health education including life skills: An important component of a Child-Friendly/Health-Promoting School*. Geneva, 2008.

Reproductive health and HIV and AIDS

United Nations. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. *Life Skills Training Guide for Young People: HIV/AIDS and Substance Use Prevention*. New York, 2003.

Education International Education Development Center, World Health Organization. *Participatory Learning Activities from the EI/WHO Training and Resources Manual on School Health and HIV and AIDS Prevention*. Geneva, 2004.

Education International Education Development Center, World Health Organization. *Learning for Life: Classroom Activities for HIV and AIDS Education*. Geneva, 2009.

Population Council. International Sexuality and HIV Curriculum Working Group. *It's All One Curriculum: Guidelines and Activities for a Unified Approach to Sexuality, Gender, HIV, and Human Rights Education*. New York, 2009.

Inter-agency Working Group on Reproductive Health in Crises. *Inter-agency Field Manual on Reproductive Health in Humanitarian Settings*. Geneva, 2010.

Save the Children and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). *Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Toolkit for Humanitarian Settings. A Companion to the Inter-agency Field Manual on Reproductive Health in Humanitarian Settings*. New York, 2009.

Persons with disabilities

Bruijn, Paulien et al. *Count me in. Include people with disabilities in development projects. A practical guide for organisations in North and South*. Veenendaal, 2012.

Handicap International. *Handicap International Disability Checklist for Emergency Response*, 2005.

Violence

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). *We can stop violence, Literacy and Life Skills. Workbook 2*. Kingston, 2003.

Guidelines

Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). *IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings*. Geneva, 2007.

Forums

www.mhpss.net

The Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Network is a global platform for connecting people, networks and organizations, for sharing resources and for building knowledge related to mental health and psychosocial support, both in emergency settings and in situations of adversity.

www.unicef.org/lifeskills

This is a website showing examples of life skills-based education around the world and providing practical tools and materials for different sectors.

<http://www.asksource.info/index.htm>

This is 'Source,' the international online resource centre on disability and inclusion, managed by Handicap International. It is designed to strengthen the management, use and impact of information on disability and inclusion in development and humanitarian contexts.

E-learning courses

www.iawg.net/resources/arhtoolkit.html

This is a one-hour interactive e-learning course on adolescent sexual and reproductive health in humanitarian settings, which was launched by UNFPA and Save the Children in 2011.

Glossary

active listening

Active listening in support situations requires an ability to focus on the speaker and allow them space to talk without voicing one's own thoughts, feelings and questions while they are speaking. Elements of active listening include trying to fully understand the point of view of the help-seeker; repeating what the help-seeker has said and summarizing what you have understood; exploring the emotional side of the problem; trying to find solutions together with the help-seeker.

advocacy

The active support of a person, group or cause; actively speaking in support of a person, group or cause.

assertiveness training

In this type of training, participants learn to know what they want, how to communicate in a way that is respectful of themselves and others, and to stand up for their rights without violating the rights of others.

assessment

The process of gathering data and analysing it to create information, in this context to establish the status of well-being of a particular population

baseline study

A descriptive survey that provides information on the current status of a particular situation in a given population.

bereavement

The emotional reaction to the loss of a significant other. Depression associated with bereavement is considered normal in the case of such a loss and is often accompanied by poor appetite, insomnia and with a sense of worthlessness.

community

A group of people having a common identity relating to certain factors: geography, language, values, attitudes, behaviour patterns or interests. A community is the social and psychological foundation for the individual, family and group: belonging, sharing, values, identity, norms, developed structures for health, education, etc.

community-based activities

Activities connected to community life, sometimes initiated by groups external to the community; involves participation of community members, using the community's knowledge, values and existing practices.

community mobilization

Activities that encourage community members to participate in the various aspects of an intervention; examples are meetings with community leaders, large community meetings and events, forming an issue-based group.

coping

The process of adapting to a new life situation – managing difficult circumstances, making an effort to solve problems or seeking to minimize, reduce or tolerate stress or conflict.

crisis

Any sudden interruption in the normal course of events in the life of an individual or group or population that makes re-evaluation of modes of action or thought necessary.

demographics

Information about the characteristics of a population, such as age, gender and ethnic profiles.

disaster

A disaster is a sudden, calamitous event that seriously disrupts the functioning of a community or society and causes human, material, and economic or environmental losses that exceed the community's or society's ability to cope using its own resources. Though often caused by nature, disasters can have human origins.

do no harm

A basic principle for successful (life skills) programming. It cautions against the unintentional harm that may be caused to those who are supposed to benefit from any intervention.

emergency

A sudden, usually unforeseen, event that calls for immediate measures to minimize its adverse consequences.

empathy

To be able to identify with and understand another person's situation, feelings, and motives.

empowerment

Gaining control of the decisions that impact one's life – as an individual or as a group. This is mainly achieved by acknowledging people and by setting up structures that allow people to participate in community activities. Engagement, whether it is in daily activities, recreational or educational activities, helps promote psychosocial well-being and empower people so that they regain a feeling of control over some aspects of life, a feeling of belonging and of being useful.

ethical

Conforming or adhering to accepted standards of social or professional behaviour.

gender-based violence (GBV)

Violence inflicted on a person due to their gender, whether they are female, male or trans-gendered. Gender is one of the root causes of violence. GBV can include all types of violence – physical, sexual, psychological, deprivation – and violators can be individuals, groups and/or societies. It can be identified as either inter-personal or collective violence, with sexual gender-based violence during conflict now identified as a war crime. Gender also is a social determinant for types of self-harm.

grief

A natural process of response to loss, conventionally focused on emotional responses but having physical, cognitive, behavioural, social, and philosophical dimensions.

interpersonal and social skills

The skills required to effectively and appropriately interact with others across a range of social situations and contexts.

key informant

An individual who, because of their role or experience in an organization or community, has important information and insight into circumstances of interest (e.g. a head teacher regarding children's learning needs, a police officer regarding children and the law).

life skills

Psychosocial competencies and abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.

protective factors

Factors that give people psychological 'cover,' reinforcing resilience and fostering well-being. They reduce the likelihood of adverse psychological consequences when encountering hardship or suffering.

Protective factors can be belonging to a caring family or community, maintaining traditions and cultures, and having a strong religious belief or political ideology which gives the feeling of belonging to something bigger than oneself. For children, some protective factors are a stable emotional relationship with adults, and social support, both within and from outside the family.

referral pathways

The individuals or institutions available to respond to the needs of children and adults when special support or services are needed.

resilience

The ability of individuals, communities, organizations, or countries exposed to disasters or crises and underlying vulnerabilities to anticipate, reduce the impact of, cope with and recover from the effects of adversity without compromising their longer term effects.

self-care

Taking care of your own body and mind, including getting enough rest and sleep, practising stress reduction techniques such as meditation or relaxation, eating regularly and well, getting exercise, keeping in touch with loved ones, talking about experiences and feelings with colleagues, having fun.

shock

A biological response created by outside events where the ability to react is paralyzed or frozen. Persons in this state may experience emotional turmoil, apathy or despair. Sometimes a person may not even remember the crisis event.

stakeholder

A person, group, organization or system who affects or is affected by something in a programme, initiative or community.

suicidality

When a person has thoughts about killing themselves or may have an actual plan to do so. Warning signs may include talking about killing or harming oneself; expressing strong feelings of hopelessness or being trapped; an unusual preoccupation with death or dying; acting recklessly, as if they have a death wish; calling or visiting people to say goodbye; getting affairs in order; saying things like "Everyone would be better off without me," or "I want out;" a sudden switch from being extremely depressed to acting calm and happy.

sustainability

The ability to maintain something into the future – in this context a programme or intervention. Active community participation in planning and implementing activities encourage ownership and in the process strengthens the likelihood that the activities will be sustained in the long term.

trauma

Used commonly to describe either a physical injury or a psychological injury caused by an extreme event. In this context, trauma is associated with severe psychological and physical distress requiring specialized services.

unaccompanied and separated children

Unaccompanied children are those who have been separated from parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so.

Separated children are children who have been separated from parents or from their previous legal or customary primary caregiver, but not necessarily from other relatives.

violence

WHO defines violence in three categories: self-directed, interpersonal and collective. Each of these categories has four different types of violence which are common to all: physical, sexual, psychological and neglect/deprivation.

vulnerability

A range of factors that may decrease an individual's or community's ability to cope with distress, e.g. poverty, mental or physical health disabilities, lack of a social network, lack of family support, age and gender.

vulnerable groups

Used to describe groups of people living with health challenges (e.g. HIV and AIDS, TB, diabetes, malaria, and cancer), people with physical disabilities and/or mental illness, children and adolescents, older people, women, people who are unemployed, people living in poverty, and ethnic minority groups.

Particularly vulnerable children include: unaccompanied, separated or orphaned children, children in institutions, children with disabilities or special needs, marginalized children, children in emergency settings, child mothers, child-headed household.

Publications

from the IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support



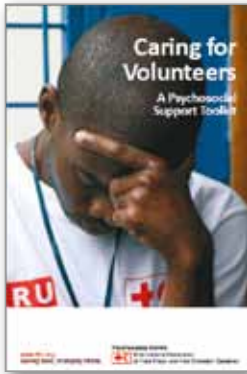
Community-based Psychosocial Support: A training kit provides resources for trainers and participants in key aspects of psychosocial support, including understanding the impact of crisis events, supportive communication, protection issues and self-care. The kit features a Trainer's book and Participant's book with accompanying PowerPoint slides. Available online in PDF-format and in hard copy with a CD-ROM. In English, French and Spanish.

Psychosocial interventions. A handbook is based on lessons learned from the psychosocial response to the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004. Aimed at psychosocial practitioners setting up a psychosocial intervention for the first time, it provides guidance on assessing needs and resources; planning and implementation; training; and monitoring and evaluation. Available online in PDF-format and in hard copy with a CD-ROM. In English, French and Spanish.



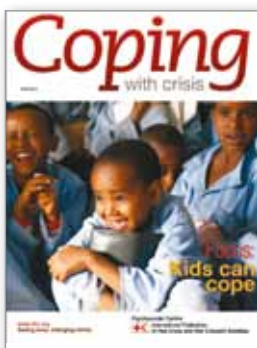
The Children's Resilience Programme: Psychosocial support in and out of schools, written with Save the Children, is a comprehensive resource kit with four handbooks:
Understanding children's wellbeing
Programme Manager's handbook
Facilitator's Handbook 1: Getting started
Facilitator's Handbook 2: Workshop tracks.

The Children's Resilience Programme also includes an online activity bank on the IFRC PS Centre's website. Available online in PDF-format and in hard copy. In English and French.



Caring for Volunteers: A psychosocial support toolkit assists National Societies in preparing and supporting volunteers for their work during and after disasters, conflicts and other crisis events. It contains practical tools and information on preparing for crises, communication and PFA, peer support and monitoring and evaluation. Available online in PDF-format and in hard copy. In English, French, Spanish, Russian, and Arabic.

Lay Counselling: A trainer's manual is for trainers working with social and humanitarian organizations. It sets out a two-day workshop with material applicable to diverse counselling contexts. Accompanying materials include PowerPoint slides and additional training activities. Available online in PDF-format and in hard copy. In English, French, German and Danish.



Coping with Crisis is the PS Centre's magazine for National Societies and other stakeholders, featuring the latest in psychosocial support, development and research. It is published three times a year in English in hard copy, and is also available online in Arabic, English, French and Spanish.

Please note that the above-mentioned versions in French, Spanish, Arabic, Russian, German and Danish have been translated by the IFRC. Other languages (translated by third parties) are available for some publications; please inquire at the PS Centre (psychosocial.centre@ifrc.org).

Life Skills

Skills for Life

A handbook

Life Skills – Skills for Life, a publication from the PS Centre, has been developed for staff, volunteers and programme coordinators working in developmental and emergency settings. With lots of practical tools to tailor activities to specific target groups, it takes the reader through the process of assessing needs, planning, implementing and monitoring and evaluating a life skills programme. Drawing on examples of life skills programmes from around the world, *Life Skills – Skills for Life* explains how life skills can enable people to cope with life and its challenges and changes.

Psychosocial Centre



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies