

INEE

GUIDANCE NOTE

PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

facilitating psychosocial wellbeing
and social and emotional learning





An international network for education in emergencies
Un réseau international pour l'éducation en situations d'urgence
Una red internacional para la educación en situaciones de emergencia
Uma rede internacional para a educação em situações de emergência
الشبكة العالمية لتوكالات التعليم في حالات الطوارئ

The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) is an open, global network of representatives from non-governmental organizations, UN agencies, donor agencies, governments, and academic institutions that are working together to ensure the right to a safe, good-quality education for all people affected by crises. To learn more, please visit www.ineesite.org.

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Acronyms

AE	Accelerated Education
AEWG	Accelerated Education Working Group
AOR	Area of Responsibility
BLP	Better Learning Programme
CFS	Child-Friendly Spaces
CPWG	Child Protection Working Group
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
INEE	Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRC	International Rescue Committee
MHA	Mental Health America of Greater Houston
MoE	Ministry of Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
PFA	Psychological First Aid
PSS	Psychosocial Support
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RCS	Red Crescent Societies
SEL	Social and Emotional Learning
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNGEI	United Nations Girls' Education Initiative
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization
YFS	Youth-Friendly Spaces

INTRODUCTION

Humanitarian crises are on the rise across the globe, with an increasing number of conflicts, regional violence, man-made and natural disasters, and climate-related episodes displacing entire communities. Many of these events have become protracted and have had measurable effects on the wellbeing of children and youth. Forced migration causes long-term disruption of every aspect of daily living, including housing, health, sanitation, recreation, and education. At the time of publication of this Guidance Note, more than 65 million people, half of whom are under the age of 18, are refugees, asylum seekers, or internally displaced persons (UNHCR, 2016). The uncertainty of their situation and the increasingly protracted nature of displacement, along with the day-to-day challenges of living and a lack of long-term solutions to their plight, puts young refugees and forcibly displaced persons at greater risk of suffering feelings of despair and hopelessness.

Humanitarian crises, which profoundly impact children and youth, sometimes also disrupt family relationships, disturb social cohesion, and create feelings of isolation, uncertainty, fear, anger, loss, and sadness. Long-term exposure to a disaster or conflict without appropriate mitigation can be damaging to both physical and mental health. The impact emergencies have on the functioning of families and communities in turn impacts the development of children and young people. Exposure to adversity, particularly in early childhood, can lead to lifelong impairment of learning, behavior, and physical and mental health (Shonkoff, Boyce, & McEwen, 2009). While some stress in life is normal and even necessary for development—children need to experience some emotional stress in order to develop healthy coping mechanisms and problem-solving skills—the type of stress a child experiences when exposed to a conflict or natural disaster can become toxic if there is intense, repeated, and extended activation of the body’s stress-response system, particularly if there is no supportive adult figure to offer protection (Center on the Developing Child, 2016; Shonkoff & Garner, 2012).

Forced displacement also often reduces children’s access to quality education and negatively affects their ability to learn. Globally, large percentages of out-of-school children and youth live in conflict-affected areas: 35 percent of primary

school age, 25 percent of lower secondary age, and 18 percent of upper secondary age. Some of the world's poorest children and youth live in areas that are especially vulnerable to natural disasters, such as flooding, drought, or severe storms (UNICEF, 2016). The resultant lack of learning and skill development puts the affected young people at risk of future unemployment, low wages, stigmatization, and other social and economic disadvantages (IASC Reference Group, 2010).

Of equal concern is the fact that education is a human right, which is relevant to all children, including those affected by emergencies and crises. The right to education is codified in multiple binding and non-binding international legal instruments.¹ While the need for protection, to which education and psychosocial support (PSS) both contribute, is heightened during emergencies, the right to education is often poorly prioritized. As such, it is incumbent upon the international community to continue to provide an education to displaced children and youth during crises, and upon educators to ensure that their programs support and enhance the psychosocial wellbeing of children and youth through appropriate PSS and social and emotional learning (SEL) activities. Education that supports the psychosocial wellbeing of children and youth affected by crisis can enable them to learn more readily and participate more fully in educational opportunities.

Children and youth in crisis situations face a plethora of risks and vulnerabilities. Well-designed and appropriate PSS can enhance resilience processes and mitigate the vulnerabilities children and youth face (Alexander, Boothby, & Wessells, 2010). Education is an especially relevant channel through which to provide such support, for the following reasons:

- Safe schools and non-formal learning spaces are some of the most beneficial environments for children and youth during a period of uncertainty. Intentional investment in education-based PSS and SEL has proven to protect them from the negative effects of disasters by creating stable routines, providing

1 Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 (Articles 2, 26). Fourth Geneva Convention 1949 (Articles 3, 24, 50) Additional Protocol II 1977 (Article 4.3 (a)). Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees 1951 (Articles 3, 22). International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966 (Article 2). International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights 1966 (Articles 2, 13, 14). Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women 1979 (Article 10). Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (Articles 2, 22, 28, 29, 30, 38, 39). Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court 1998 (Articles 8.2.b.ix and 8.2.e.iv). Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (non-binding) 1998 (Paragraph 23). Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006 (Article 24). United Nations General Assembly Resolution 64th session, 290 on Education in Emergencies 2010. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1998 on Monitoring Attacks on Schools 2011. Sustainable Development Goals 2015-2030.

opportunities for friendship and play, fostering hope, reducing stress, encouraging self-expression, and promoting collaborative behavior (Action for the Rights of Children, 2002; Alexander, Boothby, & Wessells, 2010; Masten, Gewirtz, & Sapienza, 2013).

- Psychosocial wellbeing is a significant precursor to learning and is essential for academic achievement; it thus has important bearing on the future prospects of both individuals and societies.
- PSS and SEL approaches work best when integrated into the different spheres of young people's lives. Since education settings bring children and their peers, parents, families, and communities together, they can help create a supportive environment that promotes improved psychosocial wellbeing. Ideally, the education and community settings surrounding each child work together to ensure that they receive the best possible care and follow up; this includes communication between teachers and parents, counsellors if needed, and so on.

Advocating for the inclusion of PSS in education settings

- Education can offer a stable routine and structure and support a sense of normality, all factors that can support children and youth in healing and developing resilience.
- Learning spaces provide opportunities for friendship, as well as peer and adult support. These interpersonal skills and relational supports are essential for a healthy social ecology, psychosocial wellbeing, and longer-term resilience.
- Learning spaces unite the wider community and strengthen the relational supports available for vulnerable children. Activities that engage parents, community leaders, and education authorities are critical in this regard and may also enhance social cohesion.
- Education settings are ideal for structured play activities that help children learn, recover from distressing experiences, and develop social and emotional skills.
- SEL supports the development of social and emotional competencies that strengthen academic performance and improve children's ability to navigate adversity.

Why this Guidance Note?

This INEE Guidance Note addresses a gap in the tools that are currently available to educators and professionals operating in emergency and crisis contexts. Although many resources specific to psychosocial programming exist, including the foundational guidance for the humanitarian sector referenced in this document, INEE members working in contexts as diverse as the Ebola crisis in West Africa, the aftermath of the Nepalese earthquake, and the ongoing Syrian crisis expressed a need for PSS guidance that was specifically oriented to the education sector. This INEE Guidance Note encourages more intentional and consistent implementation of practical, good-quality psychosocial interventions on the education frontlines by teachers, education administrators, parents, counselors, peers, ministries, and other education personnel in three concrete ways:

- The Guidance Note clarifies the education sector's importance in supporting the psychosocial wellbeing of children and youth.
- The Guidance Note provides educators with practical tips and advice about how to integrate PSS into formal and non-formal education efforts.
- The Guidance Note highlights linkages between PSS in education and other sectors.

Keeping schools open or providing alternative learning spaces during and after a crisis can provide a safe environment for children and youth and their families, but doing so can be extremely challenging. Embedding practical PSS and SEL activities (including peer-to-peer support, cooperative play, emotion-regulation exercises, role-play, reflective discussions, etc.) into student-student and student-teacher relationships can improve the relevance and quality of this education, and it often yields positive results for learners, teachers, and communities (NRC, 2017; UNICEF, 2009). Conversely, the psychological impact of an acute and protracted crisis can limit children's and youths' ability to learn; therefore, failing to incorporate PSS and SEL into formal and non-formal education spaces risks stunting their academic growth. Not creating a supportive learning environment thus carries significant risk and can seriously limit young people's learning and life opportunities.

Who should read this Guidance Note?

This Guidance Note was developed for all professionals who carry out or support formal and non-formal educational activities for children and youth during humanitarian crises. Relevant implementation contexts include political conflicts, violence-affected regions, man-made and natural disasters, and countries or regions experiencing a health crisis. The Guidance Note specifically focuses on the needs of front-line humanitarian and education practitioners, including school teachers, principals, and counselors, education district administrators, and managers of child-friendly spaces (CFS). It is also useful to government entities, policy-makers, community groups, humanitarian workers, parents, peers, and families for planning, programming, policy, and advocacy purposes, and to mechanisms such as the Education Cluster and other education coordination or working groups. The content is also useful for those working in related sectors, including protection, child protection, mental and public health, and so on.

Key reference materials

This INEE Guidance Note is informed by a variety of publications on the subject, five of which were foundational to its development:

- *INEE Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response, Recovery* (INEE, 2010a)
- *INEE Background Paper on Psychosocial Support and Social and Emotional Learning for Children and Youth in Emergency Settings* (INEE, 2016)
- *IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings* (IASC, 2007)
- *Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action* (Child Protection Working Group, 2013)
- *Towards Best Practice in School-Based Psychosocial Programming: A Survey of Current Approaches* (Boothby & Melvin, 2007)



This Guidance Note discusses each of the five domains presented in the INEE’s Minimum Standards for Education (2010a)—hereafter INEE Minimum Standards—as they relate to recommended PSS and SEL practices. These domains include (1) foundational standards, (2) access and learning environment, (3) teaching and learning, (4) teachers and other education personnel, and (5) education policy. The Guidance Note offers tips and examples to facilitate the application of education-based PSS programming in crisis-affected contexts.

How is this Guidance Note organized?

The remainder of this Guidance Note is organized as follows:

Section I offers an overview of the **definitions and principles** that frame this Guidance Note. The concepts outlined in this section are foundational to understanding the relationship between psychosocial wellbeing and education.

Section II offers specific **strategies** for how to incorporate PSS into education responses. These strategies are structured around the INEE Minimum Standards domains and should be read in conjunction with the standards and other INEE tools that provide greater detail on specific topics. Complementary resources are referenced throughout the text for further reading suggestions. In addition to the core strategies, each domain includes practical tips related to the implementation of PSS activities and examples of activities that have been undertaken in diverse field settings. Where available, information on the outcomes of these field interventions is included.

The **Closing** of the Guidance Note is followed by a **Glossary**, which describes useful terms relating to education and PSS.

References and **Additional Resources** are also listed, which education policy-makers and practitioners can draw from as they plan, prepare, implement, and assess PSS and SEL in the education sector.

SECTION

Definitions and principles

The integration of psychosocial support into educational activities is premised on several key concepts and principles that are referred to frequently in this Guidance Note. These concepts and principles are defined below, and the linkages between these concepts are discussed. Interested readers are encouraged to consult the INEE *Background Paper on Psychosocial Support and Social and Emotional Learning for Children and Youth in Emergency Settings* (2016) for more in-depth information.

Protection: Protection has been defined as “all activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and spirit of the relevant bodies of law,” namely, human rights law, international humanitarian law, and refugee law (ICRC, 1999, cited in IASC, 1999, p. 4). This broad definition encompasses targeted legal interventions, as well as more routine activities that uphold the protection and wellbeing of individuals during emergencies and crises.² Good education is protective and, because education is a human right in and of itself as well as an enabling right (i.e., one that facilitates other human rights), the education setting is especially important for mainstreaming protective programming and policies.

Child protection: Child protection is defined as “the prevention of and response to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children” (Child Protection Working Group, 2013, p. 13). It refers more specifically to freedom from “bullying; sexual exploitation; violence from peers, teachers, or other educational personnel; natural hazards; arms and ammunition; landmines and unexploded ordnance; armed personnel; crossfire locations; political and military threats; and recruitment into armed forces or armed groups” (INEE, 2010a, p. 115).

² The protection of refugees and forcibly displaced persons is enshrined in legally and non-legally binding frameworks, such as the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, and the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

Psychosocial: Psychosocial refers to “the dynamic relationship between the psychological and social dimension of a person, where the one influences the other” (IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support, 2014, p. 11). The psychological aspects of development refer to an individual’s thoughts, emotions, behaviors, memories, perceptions, and understanding. The social aspects of development refer to the interaction and relationships among the individual, family, peers, and community (UNRWA, 2016, p. 4).

Psychosocial support: PSS refers to the “processes and actions that promote the holistic wellbeing of people in their social world. It includes support provided by family and friends” (INEE, 2010a, p. 121). PSS can also be described as “a process of facilitating resilience within individuals, families and communities” (IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support, 2009, p. 11). PSS aims to help individuals recover after a crisis has disrupted their lives and to enhance their ability to return to normality after experiencing adverse events.

Wellbeing: Wellbeing is defined as a condition of holistic health and the process of achieving this condition. It refers to physical, emotional, social, and cognitive health. Wellbeing includes what is good for a person: having a meaningful social role; feeling happy and hopeful; living according to good values, as locally defined; having positive social relations and a supportive environment; coping with challenges through positive life skills; and having security, protection, and access to quality services. The ACT Alliance and Church of Sweden identify seven important aspects of wellbeing: biological, material, social, spiritual, cultural, emotional, and mental (ACT Alliance & Church of Sweden, 2015, pp. 42-43).

Social and emotional learning: SEL has been defined as “the process of acquiring core competencies to recognize and manage emotions, set and achieve goals, appreciate the perspectives of others, establish and maintain positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and handle interpersonal situations constructively” (Elias, Zins, Weissberg et al., 1997). The qualities SEL aims to foster include self-awareness, emotional literacy, cognitive flexibility, improved memory, resilience, persistence, motivation, empathy, social and relationship skills, effective communication, listening skills, self-esteem, self-confidence, respect, and self-regulation (INEE, 2016, pp. 10-11).

SEL is an important component that sits under the PSS umbrella. This Guidance Note views SEL as an important component of PSS that educators can and should address, since it contributes to children’s and youths’ improved psychosocial wellbeing. It is a pedagogical practice and process that is

especially fitting in both formal and non-formal educational environments, since it promotes the skills and abilities that help children, young people, and adults learn. By promoting self-awareness and interpersonal skills, SEL is a catalyst for better learning (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki et al., 2011, p. 405). PSS and SEL principles and practices are described in this Guidance Note with the aim of empowering education professionals to prevent psychosocial problems from worsening, to seek specialized care for young people when needed, and to promote SEL and social cohesion in all learning spaces. See the 2016 INEE Background Paper for an in-depth discussion on the relationship between PSS and SEL.

Resilience: Another concept related to and overlapping with PSS is resilience. Often referred to as an outcome, resilience refers to a process by which individuals in adverse contexts recover and even thrive. This Guidance Note defines resilience as the capacity of a system, community, or individual potentially exposed to hazards to adapt. This adaptation means resisting or changing in order to reach and maintain an acceptable level of functioning and structure. Resilience depends on coping mechanisms and life skills, such as problem-solving, the ability to seek support, motivation, optimism, faith, perseverance, and resourcefulness (The Sphere Project, 2017). Resilience occurs when protective factors that support wellbeing are stronger than risk factors that cause harm. Activities that promote PSS and SEL can contribute to resilience by promoting the core competencies that support wellbeing and learning outcomes (i.e., skills, attitudes, behaviors, and relationships), and which in turn allow children and youth and the education systems they are part of to manage and overcome adversity. It is also important to note that individual resilience is often boosted by community support, including interactions with peers, family, teachers, community leaders, and so on (Diaz-Varela, Kelcey, Reyes et al., 2013).

Social ecology: The social-ecological model developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979) is an important framework for understanding the relational and environmental aspects of PSS and SEL. As depicted in Figure 1, the child is placed at the center of an ecosystem in which physical, cognitive, social, spiritual, and emotional developments influence their wellbeing. The child is supported by the family, which in turn is embedded in a community structure and, ultimately, society at large. The overlapping rings in the model demonstrate how factors at one level influence factors at another level. In other words, multiple levels of risk and support can influence a child's wellbeing, thus the child's development unfolds in the context of an entire ecological system.

A supportive environment in which a child's family, school, and community are connected provides the best foundation for positive growth and development. Education settings can facilitate this because they necessarily involve actors and institutions at all levels of the social ecology, from students, parents, and community leaders to service providers, such as governments, NGOs, and multilaterals. Therefore, an activity that focuses on one level of a child's social ecology, such as drafting a policy against corporal punishment, should also consider how the policy will be implemented and appropriated at the community and school levels. When designing PSS interventions, education practitioners and policy-makers should keep these linkages in mind and, as much as possible, ensure that they are complemented and synchronized at other levels of the social ecology. For example, in order to promote holistic and sustainable change, a new policy on corporal punishment may be accompanied by or aligned with school-level initiatives to promote nonviolent classroom-management techniques and to establish protection-referral systems and complaint mechanisms (see also UNICEF, 2014a). Such a synchronized multi-level approach is what is meant by thinking systemically.

Figure 1. The Social-Ecological Model



Source: Adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015

Tips for integrating PSS wellbeing and SEL into education policy and practice

How do educators integrate PSS and SEL goals into broader outcome assessments? The following three objectives can guide the integration of PSS and SEL into education activities:

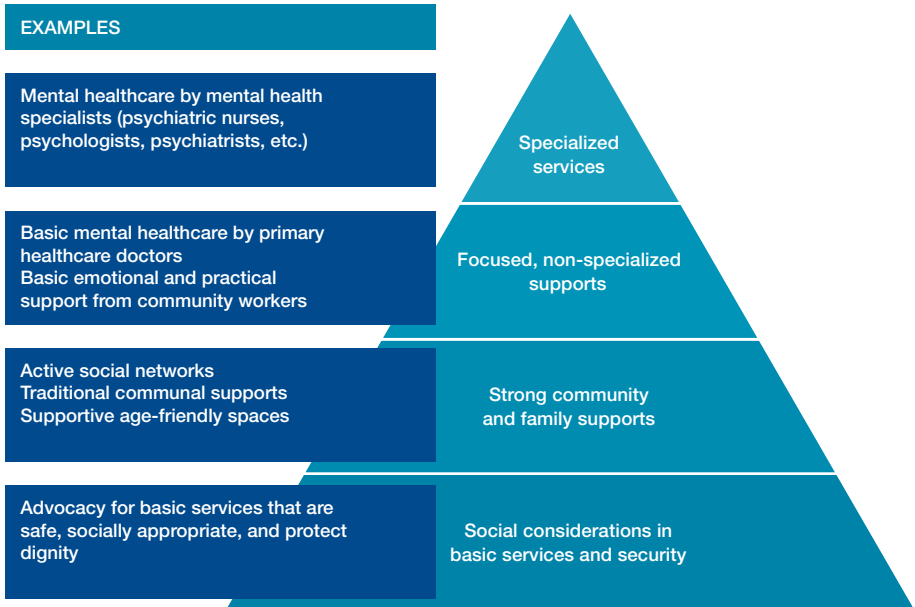
- Support learners' development of skills and knowledge through activities that focus on life skills, culturally appropriate coping mechanisms, vocational skills, and conflict-management techniques.
- Enhance emotional wellbeing by promoting feelings of safety, trust in others, self-worth, and hope for the future.
- Strengthen learners' social wellbeing through activities that build relationships with teachers, parents, and peers; create a sense of belonging to a community; provide access to socially appropriate roles; and resume cultural activities and traditions.

These objectives may be reflected in different ways across cultures, but they provide a common core that can guide PSS and SEL activities (UNICEF, 2011).

Types of interventions: The 2007 IASC Intervention Pyramid is another useful tool for thinking about the linkages between education and PSS/SEL.

Figure 2. From principles to practice: Examples of psychosocial interventions in the education sector

INTERVENTION PYRAMID



Source: Adapted from IASC, 2007

The pyramid depicts four levels of interventions that should be considered when addressing the psychosocial wellbeing of children and youth during crises:

1. Social considerations in basic services and security
2. Strong community and family supports
3. Focused, non-specialized supports
4. Specialized services

Educational activities can support and promote PSS at any of these levels; however, the types of activities or interventions used will depend on the needs of a given population and will be different at each level. Table 1 below provides some examples of activities and programs that operate at each of these four levels. Basic services, security, and efforts to strengthen social support networks are to be addressed systemically at the family, community, and policy levels. Focused specialized and non-specialized supports require institutional strengthening of schools and community institutions, as well as leadership and political commitments at the organizational and governance levels.

Intervention type (as defined by IASC, 2007)	Role of education settings	Examples of activities and programs that can be implemented at this level
<p>1. Social considerations in basic services and security</p>	<p>Education is an essential basic service during times of crisis. Educational messages can be both life-saving and life-sustaining, while the routine and normalcy of attending school supports the psychosocial wellbeing of crisis-affected children and youth. Education settings can also facilitate access to other essential services and needs. For example, they can be used to distribute food, water, and basic medical care. This generalized level of intervention seeks to support all children and young people in the education system by getting schools up and running as soon as possible and promoting equal access to quality learning.</p>	<p>Schools, non-formal education spaces, and child-friendly spaces should be secured and reopened as soon as possible following a crisis. Educators should advocate and fundraise for the inclusion of education in humanitarian responses and for adequate funding to make schools accessible and safe.</p> <p>Access to education during a conflict may be addressed through longstanding Education in Emergencies approaches, such as double school shifts, gender-sensitive community-based schooling, or the development of alternative learning spaces. In contexts where access is especially compromised, educators may consider appropriate technological platforms (such as educational TV or home-based learning packages) to support the continuity of education and the integration of SEL activities into children’s daily routines.</p> <p>The integration of PSS and SEL activities and pedagogies can help children and young people build coping mechanisms to process and manage the adversity brought on by crisis. To achieve this, educators should prioritize training and supporting teachers. These interventions do not have to wait until a crisis hits; they can be mainstreamed as a preparedness activity. It should also be noted that teachers may also be affected by a crisis and may require psychosocial support. Teachers’ and other education personnel’s needs should not be neglected during a crisis, and systems need to take account of teachers’ needs and capabilities when supporting learners with psychosocial needs.</p>

**2.
Strong
community
and family
supports**

Schools are often one of the most prominent and important institutions in a community. This makes them well placed to strengthen communities during times of crisis. Schools can serve as a bridge between family and community support systems.

Education responses should involve and work through families and communities. Existing Parent-Teacher Associations (**PTAs**) and **school councils** are often an excellent starting point. Educators should know who these community contacts are and have information and/or data on the resources and capacities that exist in a community that can be harnessed to support access to quality education opportunities during a crisis.

Where community structures do not exist, educators should design activities with the explicit goal of **engaging parents or other community members**, such as hiring **teaching assistants**.

**3.
Focused, non-
specialized
supports**

Some learners, although not in need of clinical supports, will nonetheless need more attention than others. Similarly, learners from traditionally vulnerable groups (such as those with disabilities) may have particular PSS needs that must be considered. Educators need to understand the specific needs and challenges of these learners and adapt PSS activities accordingly.

School counsellors may be hired to identify and support learners with particular needs within education settings.

Peer-to-peer learning approaches that bring academically, psychosocially, or cognitively vulnerable children together with supportive peers may be used during class time or organized as an extracurricular activity.

Self-help groups for parents and learners with particular needs can help to ensure that these needs are included in emergency responses while providing valuable peer support networks.

**4.
Specialized
services**

These services are intended for the most vulnerable learners whose needs cannot be met through education activities alone. Educators should not attempt to provide care for these individuals but refer them to the appropriate specialized mental health services with psychologists, psychiatrists, and other trained professionals. Education personnel should be able to recognize symptoms in children and know how to direct them to the necessary mental health services.

A **functioning and well-communicated referral mechanism** is key to ensuring that appropriate care is provided in a timely manner. Considerable harm can be done if referrals are made but specialized services are not available. Educators should coordinate closely with colleagues in other sectors (e.g., health ministries, social affairs, and families) to ensure that linkages are made. It is important not to wait until a crisis hits for these systems to be established; they should be a key aspect of preparedness.

Psychosocial myths can be harmful!

The majority of children and youth can cope with short-term disruptions and crises and will benefit from investment in PSS and SEL during their educational experience. Education personnel help learners advance both academically and socially, work that can be both challenging and rewarding. However, several myths about the psychology of children and youth during and after a crisis deserve attention and correction. Adhering too strongly to these myths may result in the over-medicalization of the humanitarian response, delay the implementation of services, or even alienate children, youth, and their families.

Myth: Everyone is traumatized after a crisis

Children and youth have diverse experiences, coping skills, and responses to a disaster or conflict. Many are resilient and will only require attention to their basic physical and psychosocial needs. Others will be highly distressed, especially if they have lost a parent or other close family member. Trauma will not be the norm or the most common need in a community. This is important to keep in mind, because the incorrect assumption that everyone is traumatized can result in an over investment in specialized mental health services and under investment in more generalized PSS for all members of the community and of SEL in formal and non-formal educational settings. In short, belief in this myth risks providing too little support for the majority of young people and undermines their ability to heal and thrive.

Myth: Only mental health professionals can provide PSS and SEL

Children's and youths' wellbeing is closely linked to the most important people in their lives—their parents, siblings, extended family, friends, teachers, religious leaders, and others. These relationships are essential protectors for children and youth affected by a disaster. Additionally, children's and youths' own resilience and self-agency are key factors in their ability to cope with crises. While mental health professionals or traditional healers are important referral options for children and youth with specific needs, depending on the context, it is crucial to remember that children's and youths' psychosocial wellbeing is linked to their day-to-day relationships and their own coping mechanisms. With high-quality yet minimal training, teachers and caregivers can provide simple and effective SEL activities and lessons.

Myth: Indigenous healing practices are all dangerous

Humanitarian responses are often influenced by Western approaches to psychosocial wellbeing and mental health. However, indigenous approaches to health and wellness can be highly useful to children and youth. Such approaches may include prayer, meditation, cleansing ceremonies, or other spiritual rituals. Assessments should be undertaken to determine the safety of any psychosocial intervention. If an indigenous practice that is deemed healing by the affected people and community does not violate human rights and is safe, integration of both approaches may be the most effective response.

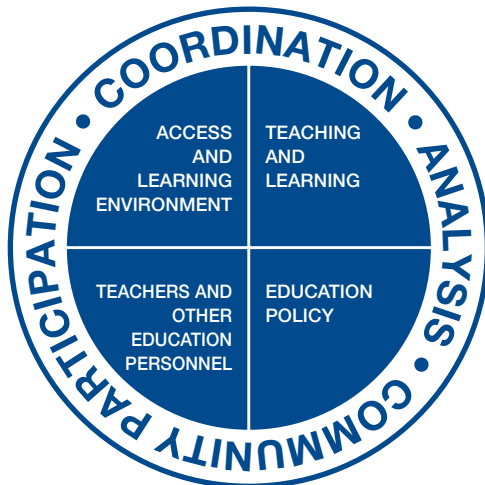
SECTION

Strategies

This section of the Guidance Note, which discusses strategies for promoting psychosocial wellbeing, is structured in accordance with the organizing framework of the INEE Minimum Standards domains. In addition to the strategies that relate to each domain, examples are provided from psychosocial supportive programs that have been implemented in various field contexts. Each domain concludes with reflection points. While this Guidance Note is a stand-alone document, it may be helpful to refer to the INEE Minimum Standards handbook for more detailed information on the domains and standards.

Minimum Standards domains

- Domain 1: Foundational standards
- Domain 2: Access and learning environment
- Domain 3: Teaching and learning
- Domain 4: Teachers and other education personnel
- Domain 5: Education policy



Foundational standards

INEE Minimum Standards Domain 1: Foundational standards

Community participation (participation and resources):

- Community members participate actively, transparently, and without discrimination in analysing, planning, designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating education responses.
- Community resources are identified, mobilized, and used to implement age-appropriate learning opportunities.

Coordination: Coordination mechanisms for education are in place and support stakeholders working to ensure access to and continuity of quality education.

Analysis (assessment, response strategies, monitoring, and evaluation):

- Timely education assessments of the emergency situation are conducted in a holistic, transparent, and participatory manner.
- Inclusive education response strategies include a clear description of the context, barriers to the right to education, and strategies to overcome those barriers.
- Regular monitoring of education response activities and the evolving learning needs of the affected population is carried out.
- Systematic and impartial evaluations improve education response activities and enhance accountability.

STRATEGIES

It is important to conduct **assessments** at the onset of a crisis to determine what psychosocial and SEL interventions would serve the affected children and youth most effectively. The assessments should pay attention to age, gender, ethnicity, religion, and culture as they gather information on demographics, the impact the emergency has had on learners, key relationships in the learners' lives, potential risks, and available resources.

Needs assessments should employ both qualitative and quantitative methods when seeking to identify and understand the experiences of children and youth during a crisis. **Quantitative** surveys may be used to count (for the whole population) or estimate (using representative sampling) the number of children in a given location who have physical and/or psychological needs as a result of a crisis. The data collected may include assessments of family-level resources and needs; a basic population count, which may be especially valuable in cases where displacement has occurred; surveys of the availability and accessibility of mental health supports and referral systems; and tracking of school enrollment or participation in non-formal education opportunities over time. Participatory ranking exercises are another way to record such data (for more information, see Ager, Stark, & Potts, 2010). Where possible, existing survey data should be used to determine the baseline situation before the crisis. Any quantitative data collected should include disaggregated information to capture the prevalence of specific vulnerabilities, such as the number of unaccompanied children or households headed by women. While such surveys are often conducted by colleagues working in the field of protection, there should be cooperation with the education sector at all times.

Qualitative data, on the other hand, is essential for soliciting more detailed (often narrative) information on the ways a crisis is experienced at the individual and community levels. Qualitative data includes reflections, perceptions, feelings, or understandings of one's own and/or family members' needs. Assessment methods may include observations from teachers, aid workers, and other community members, as well as interviews and focus groups to help determine needs, as well as culturally appropriate and acceptable responses to a crisis. Observations may be recorded using checklists or in narrative reports, such as systematic note-taking after a field visit or journaling by teachers. Qualitative data that stress participatory data collection approaches can be especially important in crisis contexts, as they may provide insights into otherwise intangible impacts and risks that communities and individuals are facing.

Where possible, assessments should draw from several data sources. This will provide a more holistic picture of a given situation and can improve the reliability of findings through triangulation (the alignment of findings across different types of data). For example, surveys may be accompanied by focus groups and observational data. In contexts where different agencies are collecting data, efforts should be coordinated to enhance triangulation and the comprehensiveness of findings. Finally, assessments should meet minimum ethical standards for data collection. This includes community members being informed about the data being collected from them and the intended use, and being sure that they consent to the data collection voluntarily. Community members should always be included in the process of determining what is needed, as they have the most accurate knowledge and information about their own situation. Useful needs-assessment tools include the Global Education Cluster *Guide to Education in Emergencies Needs Assessments Package* (2016); the Child Protection Working Group *Child Protection Rapid Assessment Toolkit* (2012); the WHO-UNHCR toolkit, *Assessing Mental Health and Psychosocial Needs and Resources: Toolkit for Humanitarian Settings* (2012); and the IOM *Psychosocial needs assessment in emergency displacement, early recovery, and return* tool (n.d.).

The way children and youth respond to adverse events depends on their individual capacities and the level of support provided by their parents and community. Therefore, their risk levels and strengths must be assessed individually. The data collected should be broad enough to inform appropriate **response strategies**, including data on context, relationships, and relevant institutions, such as the host country or community institutions, and institutions within the humanitarian architecture.

Data to collect during the assessment stage

Demographics: The number of children and youth affected (segregated by age and sex), location, scale of impact

Relationships: The emergency's impact on children's primary relationships: parents, peers, families, other important people in their lives

Vulnerable groups: Determining who the most marginalized and vulnerable groups are and collecting data on their specific needs

Risks: Potential risks that may arise for families, communities, and schools in the near future

Strengths: Available resources and capacity of the affected families, communities, and schools to recover from the emergency and restore a sense of normalcy

Gaps: Assistance needed to promote psychosocial wellbeing

Partners: Coordination with organizations that are providing education, as well as physical and psychosocial support

Simple tools can be used to conduct assessments, including observations, participatory ranking exercises, and analyses of specific subgroup experiences. However, the assessment process should not end there.

Continuous assessments that allow educators to identify changes in the way children and youth cope with adversity can be the start of thorough **monitoring and evaluation** efforts. Educators can play a crucial role in such efforts; because they observe students' day-to-day behavior and any changes that occur over time, they can help to identify their students' needs. High-quality assessments and monitoring that include children and youth in the data collection process are needed to ensure accuracy and shared understanding.

Throughout the assessment, monitoring, and evaluation stages, particular attention should be paid to **identifying and supporting the needs of marginalized groups**. For example, children and youth with disabilities have historically been marginalized in mainstream education. A large portion of this population does not attend school due to being stigmatized and encountering a lack of physical access. Humanitarian crises can increase the number of children and youth who have disabilities, particularly during violent conflicts or a widespread disease outbreak. To cultivate an inclusive and enabling environment, educators may conduct specific analyses to understand how the crisis has affected the psychosocial wellbeing of the disabled student population. For more in-depth information on how to ensure that children and youth with disabilities are included in education interventions, read the INEE *Pocket Guide to Inclusive Education* (2009) and the INEE *Pocket Guide to Supporting Learners with Disabilities* (2010b).

Children's PSS needs also may vary by gender and age. Ensuring that data are disaggregated to reflect the needs of different groups is essential to providing an informed response. Assessments should identify barriers to education access and develop inclusive response strategies that meet the needs of all community members. For example, there are a number of INEE and INEE member agency tools to support data collection that take gender into account, including INEE handbooks. For more in-depth information, read the INEE *Pocket Guide to Gender* (2010c). The psychosocial and educational needs of children of pre-primary and primary school age are often overlooked, yet they can be effectively addressed by providing CFS that offer play-based learning opportunities where early childhood stimulation and PSS activities are combined (UNICEF, 2014b).

Activities conducted during the analysis, design, and implementation phases of an assessment should consider the community both **a resource and a partner** and solicit the **participation** of community members. Community participation through existing local education structures is essential; these include community education committees, school management committees, PTAs, etc. Their participation will strengthen the assessment and connect it more effectively to different levels of the social ecology. Moreover, by working with community or school committees to revitalize and build on what is already in place, educators can facilitate a timely response and improve education quality by ensuring the relevance of the response. It is important to recognize that resources are not merely the materials provided; participation should follow the principles of partnership so that those who implement a response are informed by community knowledge and make use of the community's capacity to support education.

Finally, during a crisis, myriad organizations use assessments to plan and execute their responses. Therefore, care should be taken to ensure that the data collection and the response strategies derived from the data are **well coordinated**. To avoid duplication and wasted resources, education stakeholders should coordinate with all relevant bodies through cluster meetings and other organizing bodies to conduct assessments, plan appropriate responses, and collaborate on implementation. It is especially important to coordinate any PSS response with the health and protection sectors. The Global Education Cluster's *Needs Assessments Package* (2016) provides practical, relevant guidance and resources for conducting needs assessments, including inter-sector assessments.

Community as a resource

Communities are an essential component of the social ecology and should be partners at all stages of education in emergencies, including preparedness, response, and recovery. By working closely with communities, educators can improve the relevance, timeliness, and sustainability of a response. Care should be taken, however, not to overburden communities and, in particular, to avoid shifting financial and material responsibilities to communities that are already under strain. The importance of community contributions must be understood in a holistic manner that is not equated with material support and instead considers the range of capacities, in-kind support, and, if appropriate, the material goods and resources communities can contribute.

Examples from the field

Domain 1: Foundational standards

Nepal: Engaging parents to identify the needs of vulnerable learners

Caritas provided a one-month training and capacity-building courses for 55 mothers of children with disabilities (mental, hearing, visual, and physical) in Bhutanese refugee camps. The trainings focused on enhancing the psychosocial wellbeing of mothers and developing their competencies and skills in areas such as first aid, stress management, and family planning. Mothers and persons with disabilities established self-help support groups (10-15 adults) in each camp. They met weekly to support each other's emotional and psychosocial wellbeing, and to identify the needs of people in the camps with disabilities. The lists of identified needs provided valuable feedback to Caritas on how to program effective support for children, and for their caregivers and self-help groups. Evaluations found that the support groups enabled mothers to be more active and to feel more integrated into their communities. These groups also enabled the mothers to realize the learning potential of their children and to feel more comfortable discussing their own emotions with others (Women's Commission, 2008).

Houston, Texas: Assessing needs and coordinating psychological first aid

In the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, which slammed the Greater Houston Area in the US state of Texas in the fall of 2017, the Center for School Behavioral Health at Mental Health America of Greater Houston (MHA) launched a psychological first aid (PFA) outreach program for schools affected by the hurricane in marginalized urban communities. Storm-impact maps shared by the Federal Emergency Management Agency were overlaid on existing school maps in order to identify areas affected by flooding. The City of Houston then identified the schools serving socioeconomically vulnerable populations. MHA reached out to community districts to verify which schools were most affected and how many students' family homes had suffered damage, even if their schools had remained intact. Finally, MHA partnered with the Trauma and Grief Center at Texas Children's Hospital to assess the degree of distress suffered within the student population, and to recommend student referrals to school-based psychosocial education groups or, if needed, to specialized trauma service centers.

MHA also developed a cascade training approach for psychosocial support and trauma identification for over 60 teacher trainers, who committed to reach out to and train up to 6,500 educators from 60 to 90 socioeconomically disadvantaged schools in areas affected by Harvey. The newly trained educators served between 50,000 and 80,000 students, many of them suffering from distress, and some from acute trauma and grief.

The intervention required close coordination with the City of Houston's Focal Point on Hurricane Harvey, several education district focal points, and school administrators, as well as expert psychologists. Coordination with partner organizations specializing in PFA was needed to avoid overlap, and to ensure the widest possible coverage and optimal use of organizational capabilities (J. Pozmantier, personal communication, December 22, 2017).

Tanzania: Engaging communities through recreation and play

In Nata, northern Tanzania, parents, teachers, and students engaged in a “Play Day” activity (these can include dancing, play, drawing, painting, etc.). The activity, developed by Right To Play, was organized by the Parent School Committee, which was comprised of parents, teachers, and village representatives. Committee responsibilities included mobilizing the community to participate in raising awareness about child-protection activities and working in partnership with the school administration to develop and monitor a referral system for violence in their school as part of a school-based strategy. The themes of each Play Day, which varied, included topics such as parental responsibilities, children's rights, early marriage, child labor, and forms of violence that children in their community were facing. Through play-based experiential activities, participants learned about and discussed important contextual issues while having fun. A Right To Play evaluation noted that community relationships and parental participation improved following the regular Play Days. Parents who participated were more willing to listen to their children, value their needs, and send them to school. Additionally, over the course of the project, significant improvement was observed in national exam pass rates. This was attributed in part to increased school attendance, especially for girls (Right To Play, n.d.).

REFLECTION POINTS

- *PSS wellbeing is not a static concept and needs may change over time. **Collecting data** to inform PSS response strategies should be a **continuous and ongoing process**, from assessment through monitoring and evaluation.*
- ***Data collection** should **consider not only the needs and existing capacities** of children, youth, and teachers, but also the capacities of the community and the services of available institutions.*
- *Particular attention should be paid to **identifying and responding to the psychosocial needs of vulnerable groups** during and after a crisis. Assessments of education settings should not only identify the need for PSS and SEL but, to the extent possible, should also gather disaggregated data on the needs of particularly vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities, girls and young women, and religious and ethnic minorities.*
- *It is recommended that **education, protection, and health** coordination mechanisms (such as clusters, subclusters, Areas of Responsibility [AOR], formal/informal working groups) **cooperate in conducting needs assessments**.*

Access and learning environment

INEE Minimum Standards Domain 2: Access and learning environment

Equal access: All individuals have access to relevant quality education opportunities.

Protection and wellbeing: Learning environments are secure and safe, and they promote the protection and psychosocial wellbeing of learners, teachers, and other education personnel.

Facilities and services: Education facilities promote the safety and wellbeing of learners, teachers, and other education personnel and are linked to health, nutrition, and psychosocial and protection services.

STRATEGIES

Following an emergency, access to quality education may often be compromised. Reestablishing access to education—or creating access where it did not previously exist—is crucial for the psychosocial wellbeing of children, youth, and the wider community because it facilitates participation and integration, both of which are psychosocially relevant for children and youth struggling to cope under adverse circumstances. Ensuring and sustaining access to good-quality education creates a routine and a safe environment for vulnerable children and youth; such learning spaces can also provide a place to carry out interventions that protect and promote psychosocial wellbeing. The following strategies support the goal of providing **equal access to quality education** during and after emergencies:

1. **Identify the different risks boys and girls are facing and sensitize responses accordingly:** Quality education must be safe and gender sensitive. The risks girls and boys are facing may be different, and thus affect their access to quality education opportunities in varied ways. It is

important to identify these differences so that responses don't prejudice one gender identity over another. Girls and boys are confronted with many physical and psychological threats, such as physical and verbal bullying and violent attacks, both on the way to and from school and in school (Perezniето, Magee, & Fyles, 2017, p. 33).

2. **Consider hiring teachers' assistants:** Structure is a critical component in any classroom. It is especially important after a crisis, when classrooms are often overcrowded. Providing a teacher's assistant can reduce the burden on the teacher and increase the chance for all learners to receive the attention they need. Assistants are usually paid less than teachers, so placing them in overcrowded classrooms can improve the adult-to-student ratio at an acceptable cost. Female volunteers from crisis-affected communities have proven effective in supporting both teachers and learners. For more information, see IRC's Classroom Assistant Program in Guinea, referenced in the INEE *Pocket Guide to Gender* (2010c, pp. 21, 75).
3. **Mobilize youth volunteers:** Another strategy that can support classroom management while strengthening school-community relations is to engage youth volunteers. This approach has been successfully deployed in pre-primary and primary CFS (Hayden & Wai, 2013). An added advantage of this strategy is that providing young people with well-managed, safe volunteer opportunities can valorize their sense of belonging and teamwork, outcomes that can in turn facilitate their psychosocial wellbeing and promote a positive self-identity (Staub, 2003). When working with youth volunteers, it is important that a child-protection policy is in place and that related training is provided.
4. **Implement double-shifting:** A measure that has a long history of supporting education access during times of crisis is double-shifting. This involves using school premises during a morning shift (e.g., from 7:30 AM to 12:30 PM) and again in the afternoon (e.g., from 12:30 PM to 5 PM). When infrastructure is lacking and teaching personnel are willing and available to work in the mornings and afternoons, double-shifting can alleviate serious overcrowding or provide space to conduct additional activities focused on psychosocial wellbeing without sacrificing the regular curriculum. Teachers' wellbeing must be taken into account when considering this method, and they should not be expected to work additional hours without compensation. It also should be noted that double-shifting can increase use of the core curriculum (reading, writing, math) but risks cutting off recreational activities that are crucial to holistic

learning. Therefore, this approach should be used with caution, and SEL approaches should be integrated into the core curriculum. Finally, teachers, staff, and other education personnel should always be part of the decision-making process in these situations.

5. Make use of non-formal community-based spaces. When formal education environments are unavailable or unsafe, community-based schools that allow classes to be held in a community space such as a mosque or church or in the home can be organized and led by teachers, parents, and community leaders or volunteers. Working independently or in partnership with local and national governments, community-based schools can dramatically improve access to education, which can result in increased student enrollment and attendance, and psychosocial wellbeing. Remember, however, that safety is always a primary consideration in designing and using any learning space. Care also must be taken to avoid CFS that in any way reinforce negative gender identities (see UNGEI & NRC, 2016, p. 1).

Accelerated education programs: Accelerated learning programs are an option for children and youth who have missed out on months or years of formal schooling due to a conflict or crisis. These programs provide a condensed curriculum that enables learners to catch up with their education and eventually reintegrate into a formal school. When done well, these programs fill a critical gap in the provision of essential educational services and ensure that learners get an age-appropriate education that is responsive to their life circumstances. These programs also enhance learners' self-esteem and self-efficacy. Accelerated education programs can also include the integration of SEL skills and competencies in the adapted curriculum.

However, psychosocial wellbeing requires more than access to education. For **learning environments to be protective**, they should adopt strategies that promote learners' security and safety. Providing CFS is one way to create protective environments that support psychosocial wellbeing (see UNICEF, 2011). CFS usually provide temporary support that contributes to the care and protection of children in emergencies. They also provide a transitional structure that serves as a bridge to early recovery and long-term support for vulnerable children. CFS provide an important environment in which children can learn both soft and hard skills, including reading, writing, drawing, and other motor skills. They also provide opportunities for children to play and receive social support from the community.

Youth-friendly spaces (YFS) are social and recreational spaces for adolescents and young adults that offer a combination of structured (educational, instructional, vocational) and less structured (mentoring, games, opportunities for friendship) activities within a supervised environment. Working in partnership with community members, CFS and YFS can be mobilized rapidly after a crisis to offer recreational programming. They also provide interactive educational and life-skills activities, as well as technical and vocational education and training opportunities, which can help protect youth from competing risks, such as being recruited into militias. YFS should provide activities appropriate to the context, such as those that focus on social and emotional skills and life skills (e.g., sexual and reproductive health, or how to identify and protect oneself from unexploded ordnance). YFS also may offer skill-building opportunities, such as developing numeracy, literacy, basic technical skills, and sometimes engage in technical and vocational education and training (TVET). Training youth to develop market-relevant skills that improve their chances of employment can be a valuable psychosocially supportive strategy, as it offers hope for the future and a way to contribute to one's family and society (Monaghan & King, 2015; UNESCO, 2012). CFS and YFS activities should encourage positive peer support and peer-to-peer interactions that foster psychosocial wellbeing and behavioral accountability among both learners and teachers. The environment should strive to be free of bullying, discrimination,

Ten principles for accelerated education (AE) programs

1. Accelerated education is flexible and is generally for older learners who have missed out on schooling.
2. AE is a legitimate, credible education option that results in learner certification in primary education.
3. AE is aligned with the national education system and relevant humanitarian architecture.
4. Curriculum, materials, and pedagogy are genuinely accelerated, suitable to AE, and use relevant language of instruction.
5. AE teachers participate in continuous professional development.
6. AE teachers are recruited, supervised, and remunerated.
7. The AE center is effectively managed.
8. The AE learning environment is inclusive, safe, and learning ready.
9. The community is engaged and accountable.
10. Goals, monitoring, and funding align.

(Baxter, Ramesh, Menendez, & North, 2016, pp. 80-82)

See also the Accelerated Education Working Group (AEWG)'s up-to-date work on this topic, *Accelerated Education: 10 Principles for Effective Practice* (AEWG, 2017). AEWG is led by UNHCR, with representation from UNICEF, UNESCO, USAID, NRC, Plan, IRC, Save the Children, Education Conflict and Crisis Network, and War Child Holland.

or violence. In sum, CFS and YFS should be safe, inclusive, protective learning environments that support personal and academic growth, psychosocial wellbeing, and retention of learners.

To create **facilities and services** that promote the safety and wellbeing of learners, teachers and other education personnel should, where appropriate, be integrated with health, nutrition, psychosocial, and protection service personnel. The 2007 IASC pyramid presented in the **Introduction** offers a guide for how to respond to the psychosocial needs of individuals and communities. It is important to remember that teachers have likely also been affected by a crisis and may need support. **Section II, Domain 4** of this Guidance Note presents strategies that can support teachers in crisis contexts.

Do No Harm:

Tips for making schools supportive and safe spaces

Mary Anderson’s seminal 1999 work, *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace—or War*, drew attention to the unintended consequences that can result from humanitarian and development interventions, which sometimes exacerbate rather than mitigate the causes and symptoms of conflict. The concept of “do no harm” applies to humanitarian work in the education sector, and is adopted in the implementation of PSS and SEL to ensure that education activities do not exacerbate children’s and youths’ distress or undermine their wellbeing. The most common mistakes from past emergencies are (1) overfocusing on individual learners rather than groups, (2) attempting to provide lay counseling to children and youth who required specialized mental health treatment, (3) relying on corporal punishment as the predominant form of discipline, and (4) having only limited understanding of how to identify and build on learners’ strengths (Wessells, 2009).

Individual versus group interventions: During the early phases of a crisis, it can be impractical and counterproductive to provide individualized counseling to children and youth. It is also harmful for lay people to approach learners as “cases” or to counsel them without the proper training, certification, and supervision. These attempts may evoke troubling emotions that both learners and teachers are unable to manage, and may leave learners without appropriate professional follow-up. Additionally, singling out children or young people for special care may stigmatize

them and cause additional harm. Educators should develop learner-centered lesson plans that are beneficial for the majority of their students, and gently introduce learners to activities that enhance their emotional wellbeing and coping skills. By integrating PSS and SEL approaches into the curricula, education can act as a preventative measure that enhances the psychological wellbeing of children and youth as they develop social and emotional coping skills, thus improving their chances of avoiding the damage that can be done by toxic stress.

Specialized mental health treatment: Group-based PSS and SEL activities administered by teachers will have a positive impact on most learners and encourage healing, trust, and a sense of security. Nonetheless, a small percentage of children and youth may display aggressive, withdrawn, or other behaviors that are suggestive of deeper psychological issues. These behaviors require referral to specialized mental health services when available, or to traditional support services when appropriate. The role of education personnel is to spot signs of deeper psychological needs, refer at-risk learners to mental health specialists through the appropriate referral mechanisms, and ensure that responses and referrals are provided in a professional and confidential manner.

Discipline without violence: Physical punishment, verbal abuse, and social humiliation are rarely effective in trying to improve poor student behavior. In crisis situations, these approaches can compound the prevailing risks and cause further harm to learners' psychosocial wellbeing and development. Girls and boys who have experienced high levels of violence throughout an emergency may be retraumatized by being physically harmed or embarrassed. Reward and praise are alternative options to physical punishment, but educators who are operating under stressful conditions may themselves need extra support to model such actions and behaviors. Preparedness is key. By educating teachers about the harmful effects that such practices can have on learners' social, emotional, and academic competencies, and providing training for alternative classroom-management practices, teachers may be better able to avoid using corporal punishment during times of heightened stress. Read Module 3 of the *Training Pack for Primary School Teachers in Crisis Contexts* (Teachers in Crisis Contexts Working Group, 2016) to understand proactive and reactive classroom management, and how to avoid corporal punishment by creating a proactive classroom environment.

Highlighting strengths and resilience: Disasters and conflicts create survivors. Becoming fixated on the victim identity can encourage hopelessness and diminish human dignity. Children and youth benefit from interventions that identify and cultivate their strengths, which may arise from their individual talents and abilities, their familial relationships, and their cultural practices. These qualities may include a child’s sense of humor, an affectionate grandparent, or a healing spiritual practice. To support children and youth most effectively in a crisis, opportunities to elevate personal and social assets and help learners foster a sense of control over their own ability to recover and thrive should be encouraged by parents, teachers, and communities.

Example from the field

Domain 2: Access and learning environment

Guinea: Engaging female classroom assistants

In 2001, it was revealed that refugee children in Guinean refugee camps, particularly girls, had experienced widespread sexual exploitation and violence. In a context where girls’ access to education was already limited, these incidents further reduced their school attendance. To protect children, prevent future incidents, and increase girls’ school attendance, the IRC launched the Classroom Assistant programs. Women received training from IRC on how to support girls in classroom settings. The assistants were assigned to all classes in grades 4-12 and were also tasked with conducting home visits in cases where female students repeatedly missed school. The assistants would talk with parents and advocate for the girls to return to school. **The program evaluation found that, as a result of the initiative, both male and female students perceived their classrooms to be calmer, better organized, and more conducive to learning,** and relations between teachers and students were deemed more respectful (UNHCR, 2007).

REFLECTION POINTS

- *Schools and non-formal learning spaces such as CFS and YFS are key places in which to reach children and youth in need of PSS and SEL interventions. It is therefore important to **expand access to education during and following emergencies, to integrate PSS and SEL activities into existing school curricula or school-based activities**, or to provide the PSS and SEL activities as extracurricular options. A range of immediate and intermediate measures can facilitate access to these activities until longer-term provisions are made to accommodate all learners comfortably.*
- *It is important to **distinguish between group interventions** that can be integrated into existing education activities and the **need for separate systems** for learners who require **specialized services and mental health care**. Functional referral mechanisms should be used to connect schools to specialized services, including healthcare. These referral mechanisms should be closely coordinated with sectors such as child protection and physical and mental health, and should be monitored periodically to ensure that they properly identify and conform to learners' needs.*
- ***Teachers and other education personnel should be trained to understand existing referral mechanisms, to recognize when a learner needs support**, and to **respect confidentiality** when talking to students. Places where referral mechanisms don't yet exist should be flagged through coordination systems, including education, protection, and health clusters, working together with other coordination mechanisms such as working groups, the child protection AOR, etc.*

Teaching and learning

INEE Minimum Standards Domain 3: Teaching and learning

Curricula: Culturally, socially, and linguistically relevant curricula are used to provide formal and non-formal education that is appropriate to the particular context and needs of learners.

Training, professional development, and support: Teachers and other education personnel receive periodic, relevant, and structured training according to the needs and circumstances.

Instruction and learning processes: Instruction and learning processes are learner centered, participatory, and inclusive.

Assessment of learning outcomes: Appropriate methods are used to evaluate and validate learning outcomes.

STRATEGIES

Supportive relationships between teachers and their students can be the most effective form of psychosocial support provided in educational settings.

Teachers should seek to create safe and supportive learning environments that strengthen learners' physical, mental, and emotional development. This is more easily done when teachers **are themselves well supported and when they have received training focused on PSS and SEL** (see **Section II, Domain 4** for more on this point). Training teachers to incorporate PSS and SEL activities into their teaching techniques enables them to bring these activities into their everyday classroom or learning space, and thus to provide intellectual and emotional stimulation. Psychosocially supportive learning environments can have a positive effect on students' self-esteem and self-efficacy, and thus on their mastery of traditional subjects, such as math, reading, science, and the humanities. A positive feedback loop is thereby created, as mastering academic material helps students build ever more

confidence, self-esteem, and self-efficacy, and even gives them hope for the future. Teachers and other education personnel often understand their students' context better than those outside the school or learning context, thus they should be supported in creating or adapting curricula that meet their students' social and cultural needs. IRC's Healing Classrooms is a well-recognized educational approach used in emergency settings that helps education providers create positive school and classroom environments. For further guidance, see the textbox on the IRC's Healing Classrooms approach. Also, for strategies for building basic teaching competencies for teachers in crisis contexts, see the *Training Pack for Primary School Teachers in Crisis Contexts* (Teachers in Crisis Contexts Working Group, 2016).

In addition to integrating PSS into classroom management strategies, SEL skills and activities should be **integrated into the existing curricula** whenever possible. This may take the form of explicit content, the promotion of certain skills, or the mitigation of actions, attitudes, and behaviors that can be explicitly or implicitly embedded in the curriculum. PSS wellbeing may also be promoted through extracurricular activities. However, emergency situations often force educators to condense their curricula, which leaves less time for extracurricular activities. The best learning environments provide services that connect education activities to the work of trusted adults, such as social workers, counselors, job trainers, mentors, and other community service providers. While academic spaces may have limited resources, educators can enhance these facilities and the services available to their learners by connecting with other community organizations.

The IRC's Healing Classrooms approach

Healing Classrooms are safe and nurturing learning spaces where children affected by crisis and conflict can learn, grow, and thrive. Education providers create a positive school and classroom environment where children are safe and free from violence, and where they aim to create:

- A sense of control: Students learn within a stable, secure, predictable learning environment and from activities
 - A sense of belonging: Children feel like they belong and see themselves as students and valuable members of the school community
 - Feelings of self-worth: Students feel confident, capable, and proud of themselves and their abilities
 - Positive social relationships: Students develop healthy social relationships and positive interpersonal skills
 - Intellectually stimulating learning opportunities: Building a stimulating environment with diverse learning opportunities helps students feel that they are learning and well
- (IRC, 2006, pp. 5-6)

Teachers can make learners more comfortable when participating in difficult conversations by modeling compassion and empathy. Listening carefully to the feelings causing a student's restlessness or unresponsive behavior is key to restoring their ability to learn and to maintain high academic standards.

Integrated approaches should include specific PSS and SEL activities that help to build a culture of individual wellbeing and social cohesion. **Instruction and learning processes that promote psychosocial wellbeing** include lesson plans that explore the concept of change; coping strategies that help children and youth adapt; cooperative games that foster social cohesion and cooperation; social-awareness simulations that promote empathy and understanding; structured play that facilitates healing and develops adaptive skills; visualization exercises that ask learners to consider their future goals; activities that focus on developing self-awareness to encourage learners to reflect on their abilities; and breathing or relaxation exercises that help learners recognize and manage their own emotions. These lessons can be incorporated into the regular school day or afterschool activities.

These interventions and their impact on individual learners and the community should be formally **assessed** through monitoring and evaluation techniques. The assessments should examine the relationship between the interventions and general indicators of wellbeing, and the relationship between PSS and SEL interventions and indicators of academic performance.

Creating supportive learning environments: Tips from UNRWA schools

Creating supportive educational environments is crucial for PSS-SEL, but this is not the responsibility of teachers alone. There are many ways to create supportive educational environments, ranging from the pedagogical training teachers receive to extracurricular activities and the dedicated provision of school counselors.

Promote pedagogies that integrate SEL: Classroom-based activities that help students learn effective communication skills and enhance their social and emotional capacities will help them better understand and manage their emotions, control their impulses, and feel and show empathy for others. Teachers should be supported in implementing such activities through their day-to-day pedagogy. In-service training models that bring teachers together to learn about such approaches can help reorient their

practices toward promoting SEL, while also providing them with a network of supportive peers with whom to share ideas and offer guidance. The UNRWA School Based Teacher Development program, a professional development program aimed at reinforcing a child-centered pedagogy that supports children's psychosocial wellbeing, is an example of this approach. UNRWA teachers work through the program in situ, through self-learning, and with their peers (UNRWA, 2013).

Teach conflict-resolution skills, including through arts and play:

Teaching students the tools of peaceful conflict resolution is a process that engages young people to work together to de-escalate, resolve, and process interpersonal conflicts. Rather than aggressively confronting others or passively avoiding confrontation, young people should be encouraged to demonstrate courage by addressing conflicts directly and sharing their feelings and needs honestly, to show compassion by listening to others' perspectives and empathizing with their experiences, and to work collaboratively with others involved to process the conflict and make a plan for a solution. Arts, theater, and even sports activities can all be used to this effect. These approaches also can be achieved through extracurricular activities after the school day or during summer camps, thereby extending the safe school space beyond classroom hours. UNRWA developed a Psychosocial Support Recreational Activities Resource Guide to support and help its teachers, counselors, and community members in organizing fun learning and recreational activities for all UNRWA children and youth, especially those living in challenging contexts (UNRWA, 2013, 2015).

Peer-to-peer academic support: Education settings can promote mutually supportive activities among students. These activities can strengthen learners' social ecology and reduce pressure on teachers. A World Bank study that examined the reasons for high academic performance among Palestinian refugees in UNRWA schools in Jordan, the West Bank, and Gaza found that supportive relations among students were an important source of student resilience. One way this was achieved was through formalized peer-learning techniques, whereby students demonstrating high academic performance conducted workshops for their peers during breaks and after school. Students who were experiencing academic difficulties found these sessions more comfortable and easier to understand than their classes, which helped them overcome difficulties

while building social and emotional skills. High-performing students, on the other hand, felt validated and recognized for their efforts, all of which contributed to the social cohesion of the school environment (Abdul-Hamid, Patrinos et al., 2015).

School counselors: Students sometimes may need the support and advice of a dedicated, supportive adult. School-based counselors are one approach to providing this support, and they have been employed to positive effect in UNRWA schools in the West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. Counselors can help students alleviate the build-up of stress they experience in crisis contexts by allowing them to confidentially discuss home- or school-based problems. School counselors can also help reduce pressure on teachers by allowing them to focus on the classroom-based SEL skills that enhance students' coping mechanisms and academic competencies (UNRWA, 2016).

Examples from the field

Domain 3: Teaching and Learning

Lebanon: Building peer-support networks in a refugee context

To foster social cohesion between host and refugee communities in Lebanon, War Child Holland collaborated with parents in eight municipalities to create children's football teams, taking care to ensure that each team was gender balanced. With community participation in creating teams, 600 children ages 10-14 on a total of 20 teams participated in football games. Two trained coaches were nominated for each team, one Syrian and one Lebanese. In addition to having fun and learning to cooperate and compete in healthy ways, children were given a chance to openly discuss issues of conflict and how to connect with peers in a host-community context. These discussions were held 30 minutes before and after each football match. The post-program evaluation suggested that children who participated felt better able to cope with daily challenges, develop trust, and recognize and manage their emotions and behaviors. This created a more supportive and safer environment for refugee children and their families (Akar, 2015).

Palestine: Improving psychosocial wellbeing for better academic outcomes

The NRC's Better Learning Programme (BLP) is a psychosocial intervention implemented in schools in Gaza and the West Bank. The program combines psychosocial and educational approaches to help teachers and education psychologists support children and young people who have experienced traumatic events. The BLP consists of three program intervention phases, including a general, classroom-based psychosocial support approach targeted at all children and young people (BLP 1); a small-group intervention to support resilience among a more specific target group of academic under-achievers (BLP 2); and a specialized clinical approach to address nightmares, which many children experience as a chronic symptom of traumatic stress (BLP 3). The children and young people are also supported through individual sessions. The BLP connects education personnel with parents to help them understand their children through a community-based approach. A comprehensive evaluation of the program carried out in the West Bank in 2015 showed that 67 percent of the targeted children who had trauma-related nightmares reported that the bad dreams ended fully. A further 28 percent reported that their nightmares decreased to two or three times per week, and the remaining 5 percent reported that their nightmares decreased to four times per week. Most of the children involved in the program became more active academically and socially: 79 percent reported an improvement in completing their homework after the intervention, 52 percent reported feeling safe at school and on the way to school, and 74 percent felt they were no longer isolated because of their problems (NRC, 2016; Schultz, Marshall, Norheim et al., 2016).

REFLECTION POINTS

- Teachers should aim to **foster safe and supportive learning environments** that strengthen learners' physical, mental, and emotional development. This can be achieved through teacher training that provides teachers with techniques for incorporating PSS and SEL approaches in their classroom management and teaching of academic material.
- These approaches ideally should be **integrated into the existing curricula**, and/or the curricula should be **adapted to foster skills development in a psychosocially supportive way**. Arts, play, and sports should be incorporated where appropriate, while ensuring that attention is paid to gender and cultural sensitivity. In a crisis, extracurricular activities too often are reduced or scrapped altogether to allow educators to complete the academic syllabus on time. However, a lack of activities that support positive self-expression and interaction with others can compound feelings of isolation and sadness. This in turn can negatively affect students' academic performance. **Educators should consider ways to incorporate activities that support positive self-expression into the syllabus.**
- Teachers should promote peer interactions, in particular **peer support**. Positive peer engagement strengthens children's and youths' confidence, self-esteem, and self-efficacy. Activities that **encourage discussion and dialogue between learners**, as well as **peer-to-peer learning activities** and **mentoring**, are especially important and can be part of daily classroom activities.

Ideazone: Classroom-based activities that promote psychosocial wellbeing

FOR CHILDREN

A. COMPASSIONATE CLASSROOMS AGES 5-10, THE EMPATHY HEART

- The teacher can prepare paper hearts for each student in advance, or the class can create them together. You make them by folding the paper in half and cutting a half heart, so when the paper is opened a full heart appears.
- Begin the activity by passing out the paper hearts while explaining to students that they are about to listen to a story. Students should be instructed to fold their paper heart each time the main character in the story is feeling bad because someone does not show her/him empathy. Stories may include a young person going about their daily activities who is being made fun of or is scolded by people close to them (parents, siblings, teachers, or other students).
- Once the story is over, you can return to as many parts of the story as time permits and ask students how they would respond with more empathy. They can undo one fold at a time in their paper heart each time a nice thing happens.

Discussion questions: Once the story is finished, teachers can lead a discussion with the students using the following questions:

1. What is wrong with your hearts now? (they are all wrinkled)
2. Why do the hearts look like they do? (because the character suffered from people being mean to him/her)
3. How can we make it so that the heart is not wrinkled? (by saying nice things instead of mean things)

Key points: Words and actions can have a big impact on how someone feels, so we always need to be careful what we say and do to others.

(PACER National Bullying Prevention Center, 2017)

B. COOPERATIVE GAMES FOR DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS

AGES 6-9, HOT HOOPS

- Each child draws a shape around themselves with chalk—a square, triangle, or rectangle.
- The teacher chooses a certain shape to be “hot” by saying, “The triangles are hot!” Any child standing in a triangle must hop out of it and join another child in a different shape.
- No more than four children should be in one shape at a time. When a shape has four children standing inside it, the teacher can choose another shape to be “hot.”
- To begin the game again, children should return to their original shapes.

Things to watch for: Are the children actively helping each other get into shapes that are not “hot”? Are they comfortable sharing a space with each other?

Discussion questions: Once the game is finished, teachers can lead a discussion with the students using the following questions:

- Reflect: How did you feel when you learned that your shape was “hot” and you had to find a new one? How did it feel when others were asking to join your shape? Did you help other children find another shape if yours was full? Why or why not?
- Connect: Can you think of a time when you were not included in a group? How did that make you feel?
- Apply: What can you do to ensure that others feel accepted and welcome in a group?

(Right to Play International, 2018)

AGES 5-11, UNITY TAG

- Several children (as few as three and as many as ten) hold hands and form a circle. One child is assigned to be the “Protected Child” and stands inside the circle formed by the Protectors.
- One child is asked to stand outside the circle. He/she represents “Challenge.” When the game begins, Challenge tries to tag the Protected Child.
- The Protectors try to keep the Protected Child safe by forming a barrier between the Protected Child and Challenge. The circle must not be broken, or Challenge wins. Each game lasts approximately 30 seconds.

Key points: This game is a fun way to introduce the group to concepts of togetherness and unity. It symbolizes the group's commitment to keeping each other safe from both physical and emotional challenges.

AGES 12-18, THE HUMAN KNOT

- Groups of three to eight children are asked to stand in a circle. The more children, the more difficult the activity.
- Each child is asked to grasp the hand of two different children. Once each child is holding the hand of two others, their arms form a human knot.
- The object of the game is for the children to untangle their knot of arms so that no arms are crossed, but without letting go of any hands. This means they will need to step over or under each other's arms in order to untangle themselves.
- Children do not have to be facing the same direction as when they started in order for their group to win.

Key points: This game is a fun way to introduce the group to concepts of appraisal, togetherness, unity, and problem-solving. It symbolizes the group's commitment to working together in a patient and safe manner.

AGES 12-18, THE HUMAN KNOT: OUTSIDE IN

- The group holds hands in a circle with their backs to one another.
- The object of the game is to see if, without letting go of hands, the group can maneuver themselves so that they are standing in a circle facing one another.

AGES 12-18, TEAM JUGGLE

- The children are asked to stand in a circle, and one is given a ball.
- He/she starts the "juggle" by tossing the ball to somebody else in the group, who in turn tosses the ball to a different group member.
- This continues until each member of the group has touched the ball during a round without any member touching the ball more than once, and the ball has been returned to the person who started the game.
- The group continues passing the ball throughout the circle, following this same pattern. A second and third ball can be introduced to increase the challenge.

(Macy, Macy, Gross et al, 2002)

FOR TEACHERS

The following activities can be used in trainings or support sessions for teachers. They are taken from the IRC *Creating Healing Classrooms: Guide for Teachers and Teacher Educators* (2006).

MODELING TEACHER-CENTERED TEACHING 20 MINUTES

Begin with a quick discussion of teacher-centered teaching, asking participants to identify the main methods used (teacher lectures, student note-taking, memorization, group response to questions, and so on). When this list has been assembled, ask for volunteers to model a particular method to the entire group of participants. This can be done in a lighthearted way, so encourage participants to have fun “acting” as a teacher. Finish with a quick closing discussion of the different teaching styles.

TEACHING STRATEGIES: ADDING TO OUR REPERTOIRE 20 MINUTES

Begin this session by asking participants to suggest other student-centered activities/strategies, especially those they already use in their work. Participants should also identify possible obstacles that might prevent implementation of the strategies. Responses should be recorded and, if the group wishes, participants who suggested additional strategies may be given paper to write them up formally for the group.

GROUP ACTIVITY: A HAPPY CHILD 30 MINUTES

Have the participants form groups and ask them to draw the outline of a child on a sheet of flipchart paper. Each group’s child should be given a name, which is also written on the page. On the left side of the page, have each group list “normal” behaviors and characteristics that they would expect their child to display under ordinary circumstances. The lists will probably record things like playful, curious, friendly, trusting, etc. Report these lists back to the full group and establish an overall list.

Then, ask each group to return to their child outline and list children’s behaviors and emotions in crisis and post-crisis recovery situations. Responses such as sad, withdrawn, fearful, anxious, and so on will likely be recorded. Again, report these lists back to the full group and establish one overall list. When participants compare the two lists, children’s suffering will become clear.

BRAINSTORMING: HELPING CHILDREN COPE *30 MINUTES*

In this activity, participants begin thinking about how to help children who have been affected by crisis.

In the large group, use a question-and-answer format to discuss differences in the degree of traumatic response among children, noting that each child reacts in her or his own way. Introduce the pyramid depicting different levels of traumatic response in children and ask for feedback and comments from the participants. Ask the participants to discuss the traditional ways children who exhibit distressful behaviors are treated and helped. All participants should be aware of how to access the traditional treatments suggested.

Discuss and list the potential psychosocial benefits children can receive through recreational programs and schooling. Give participants time to make their own detailed lists of activities that would be appropriate in their community context. A typical question might be, "Imagine that you are working with a group of children who are exhibiting distressed behaviors; what activities can you use to help them feel better?"

Teachers and other education personnel

INEE Minimum Standards Domain 4: Teachers and other education personnel

Recruitment and selection: A sufficient number of appropriately qualified teachers and other education personnel are recruited through a transparent participatory process, based on selection criteria that reflect diversity and equity.

Conditions of work: Teachers and other education personnel have clearly defined conditions of work and are appropriately compensated.

Support and supervision: Support and supervision mechanisms for teachers and other education personnel function effectively.

STRATEGIES

Common education challenges in protracted crises include limited resources and administrative support, large classes, inadequate professional training, hostile political environments, and few opportunities to grow professionally.

Teachers also may have directly suffered the effects of a conflict or natural disaster, lost their homes or loved ones, or experienced violence or injury themselves. Frustration and burnout among educators can create toxic conditions that undermine their psychosocial recovery and resilience, and result in teachers leaving their jobs. Teacher absenteeism in turn can be a barrier to keeping schools open and functioning effectively.

Addressing and controlling the basic needs of teachers is therefore foundational to successful PSS interventions.

Since emergencies may alter the pool of available teaching staff, clear communication with teachers who have been retained or recently hired is needed to **clarify recruitment and selection processes**, compensation

issues, work schedules, incentive packages, and other conditions of work both during the emergency and once it is over. See the INEE Minimum Standards, Domain 4, for helpful guidance on improving recruiting and hiring practices (INEE, 2010a).

School administrators are responsible for ensuring that teachers and other education personnel receive the right **support and supervision**, including for **non-administrative work conditions**. This involves material and financial supplies, as well as moral and peer support. Developing a **plan for teacher and staff wellbeing**, such as offering peer group discussions or stress management techniques, can be especially helpful. In some contexts, integrating prayer and spirituality into activities to promote wellbeing may be most effective, while offering counseling services may be the priority in others. Ultimately, **administrators are responsible for ensuring that educators have clearly defined conditions of work that include PSS in the academic environment**. Teacher wellbeing and motivation are influenced by both personal and professional experiences, thus administrators should strive to be aware of the personal challenges teachers are facing. This includes integrating data on teachers' needs into PSS needs assessments.

Psychosocial training programs should build on existing good practices. For example, effective teachers often strive to create comfortable, supportive learning environments where learners can feel safe. Teacher training can help determine how this is done in the midst of an ongoing disaster or when there is a very large number of students. Whether during emergencies or normal times, teachers ideally can help learners focus and learn by having well-planned lessons with clear objectives and a beginning and an end, and appropriate teaching aids, followed by a review of what was learned. This sequence may need to be modified to accommodate additional recreational or reflective activities, but it still must be in keeping with the overall structure of activities.

Principles to guide teacher trainings

- Engage teachers in reflection on and recognition of the importance of the teacher-student relationship in promoting resilience.
- Provide examples of lessons and activities teachers can use in the classroom to promote good classroom management.
- Recognize the stresses teachers themselves are facing and help facilitate discussion and support for them.

To determine how to build on existing good practices most effectively, psychosocial training programs should introduce teachers to the range of cognitive and emotional responses learners may have in emergency situations and explore how to understand and respond empathically to them. Children and young people who have experienced a conflict or disaster are typically more likely to have psychological stress than children and youth living in non-crisis situations. This stress affects their concentration and quality of sleep, and interferes with their ability to learn.³ Respect, compassion, and listening are the keys to promoting children's and youths' resilience, improving their attention span, and fostering their academic achievement (IRC, 2011). Teachers' willingness to share their own feelings can help learners understand that their emotions are normal. Compassionate classrooms can serve as the building blocks for social cohesion, reestablishing trust, and maintaining school attendance. For more in-depth information on how to create psychosocially supportive learning spaces for learners, read IRC's *Creating Healing Classrooms: Guide for Teachers and Teacher Educators* (2006) and IRC's *Creating Healing Classrooms: A Multimedia Teacher Training Resource* (2011).

How teacher-training content is delivered is just as important as the content itself. Trainings must be inclusive, gender sensitive, and participatory—in other words, trainings should exemplify and instill the behaviors and actions teachers should model in their classrooms or non-formal learning spaces. The norm should be to provide training (and, ultimately, teaching) methods that positively influence self-confidence and self-esteem. Trainings, therefore, should be designed around participant-centered activities rather than didactic or lecture-based approaches.

Finally, educator performance should be evaluated through supportive supervision. This type of evaluation helps educators improve their approach to promoting academic achievement and fostering PSS and/or integrating SEL approaches into the classroom or learning environment. Performance evaluations should ideally review whether the teacher has created a socioemotionally supportive learning environment.

3 To read more about how to identify common psychological signs of stress, read chapter 2 of the ACT Alliance and Church of Sweden's *Community-Based Psychosocial Support Training Manual* (2015).

Example from the field

Domain 4: Teachers and other education personnel

Kenya: Supporting teachers to support students

In Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya, teachers received training from the Teachers for Teachers initiative on pedagogy, curriculum and planning, child protection, students' wellbeing and inclusion, and the teacher's role and wellbeing. Organized and facilitated by trained coaches, teachers held regular in-person meetings to discuss the daily challenges they faced while teaching in emergency contexts. Through WhatsApp, the teachers were connected with mentors who provided ongoing support, which allowed them to share their experiences and provide mutual support. Teachers reported feeling better prepared, more confident, more motivated, and more inclined to collaborate with peer teachers in their collective efforts to better support learners. This improved wellbeing in turn led to positive changes in their teaching practices, such as utilizing positive discipline rather than punishment, and in their relationships with students (Mendenhall, 2017, pp. 6-8).

REFLECTION POINTS

- *Teachers may have suffered the direct effects of a conflict or natural disaster. **Addressing the needs of teachers** is therefore **foundational to successful PSS interventions**. Developing a **teacher-and-staff wellbeing plan** can be especially useful in this regard, and school leaders and education authorities should incorporate it into staff development plans.*
- ***In times of crisis, teachers need support too.** Activities that focus on teachers' wellbeing can include continued professional guidance and supervision, such as in-service training and check-ins that gauge teachers' emotional condition and need for additional supports.*
- ***Peer-to-peer networks** enable teachers to support each other. They can be as simple as linking through WhatsApp groups, text groups, email groups, etc., to share frustrations, challenges, and creative solutions.*
- *Learners rely on teachers for advice, mentoring, compassion, and role modeling. It is therefore **essential that school administrators, education authorities, education ministries, and other organizations prioritize teachers' working conditions**. Teachers and other education personnel need predictable and clearly defined work conditions. Expectations are especially important to a community in crisis, when the usual systems and structures (including budgetary ones) have been compromised. In such cases, authorities should communicate as clearly and quickly as possible with teachers about what is expected of them and how their efforts will be recognized.*
- *Attention must be paid to both the **content and structure of teacher training**. Trainings must be inclusive and participatory, and they should model the behaviors and approaches teachers are expected to replicate in the classroom.*

Education policy

INEE Minimum Standards Domain 5: Education policy

Law and policy formulation: Education authorities prioritize the continuity and recovery of quality education, including free and inclusive access to schooling.

Planning and implementation: Education activities take into account international and national education policies, laws, standards, and plans, and the learning needs of affected populations.

STRATEGIES

For psychosocial and SEL interventions to promote lasting and meaningful change, they should be part of a systemic approach and reflect a centralized commitment to improving psychosocial wellbeing. In other words, the principles and good practices of PSS and SEL must be reflected across all levels of the education system, including **law and policy formation**. It is up to national ministries of education (MoEs) and teacher-training programs to respect, protect, and fulfill the right to education at all times. This means that national education authorities at all levels should be prepared for a rapid education response, including anticipating challenges and planning how to sustain any gains that can be achieved during the emergency response.

Given the cross-sector nature of psychosocial wellbeing, it may also be appropriate to review and consider laws, legislation, policies, and procedures that are relevant or needed in other sectors to provide PSS and SEL more effectively in schools. For instance, **referral systems between the education and health sectors** should be clearly defined and communicated by both education and health authorities in order to protect the children and young people most affected by an emergency.

Similarly, effective PSS and SEL programming require the **participation and support of a multitude of education stakeholders throughout the planning and implementation processes**. MoEs that are working in crisis-affected countries should prepare and plan for education responses that incorporate PSS and SEL into the curriculum and teaching methodologies, as well as in teacher-training programs. As explained in earlier sections, integrating PSS and SEL activities into teaching techniques fosters learners' intellectual and emotional stimulation, which in turn positively affects their mastery of academic material and traditional subjects (i.e., math, reading, science, and the humanities). It also enables students to develop more self-esteem and self-efficacy. Therefore, enabling affected populations to acquire skills through education by investing in PSS and SEL pays off immensely for their post-crisis recovery and long-term development.

Those who make and support education policy and programming should remember that effective PSS considers not only a response to a crisis but preparedness and recovery as well. This requires approaches that enhance the protective environment, encourage linkages between actors, and consider the overall resilience of the system. Immense challenges may impede education authorities' response both during and after a crisis, but they should nonetheless strive to incorporate PSS and SEL into their education responses. The same goes for all agencies supporting emergency education responses.

Challenges that may impede the response of education authorities during and after a crisis

- Limited funding and low staff capacity
- Security or access issues
- Coordination difficulties
- Emphasis on infrastructure rather than on program content
- Poor-quality inputs and a lack of quality measurement

Education authorities' checklist

Preparedness

- Create emergency or contingency plans that detail how to **reopen education institutions** and/or **open temporary safe learning places where psychosocially relevant education services can be provided** (these plans may draw from the strategies described in **Section II, Domain 2: Access and learning environment**). See Education Sector Contingency Plans (INEE, 2018).
- Develop plans to **certify** learners' academic attainment during a crisis. This is critical to carry out early on because of the impact on learners' ability to attain employment or further education, and thus on their motivation and future aspirations.
- Identify key stakeholders with whom to collaborate in **affected communities** if an emergency occurs. Existing, **active, and well-supported school management committees and/or PTAs** are often an excellent entry point. Education authorities should know or find out who these people are and how to contact them. Authorities should also consider ways to provide these organizations with the financial resources they may need to restart or continue education during an emergency when normal systems and processes have broken down.
- **Collect data on community-level risks, strengths, and capacities.** Reliable data is essential to any response, and integrating these elements can be especially useful for informing a PSS response. Risk assessments too often fail to recognize the strengths and capacities of communities that can contribute to their own educational recovery. The more information authorities have on community resources, the more immediate and effective response there can be at the local and community levels.
- Put in place a confidential and culturally appropriate **mechanism to handle complaints** and to report protection and psychosocial issues when needed.
- **Mainstream the development of social and emotional skills and competencies** through the curriculum and associated teacher preparation and support. Make these skills and competencies explicit learning objectives.

Response

- Collaborate with **local and national-level needs assessments**. Advocate for assessments that collect data on the psychosocial needs of learners and teachers and inform responses to these needs. Authorities should also lead the way in ensuring that disaggregated data on vulnerable groups is collected and prioritized by community-based organizations, NGOs, and multilateral partners.
- **Address existing shortfalls in education access and quality in an emergency response**. Emergencies provide an opportunity for communities to build back better than they were before. Through advocacy, outreach, sensitization, capacity development, training, and collaboration, existing risks can be mitigated and addressed. Response strategies and implementation plans should therefore take into account and align with existing government priorities, even during an emergency response.
- **Raise awareness and advocate** for psychosocial wellbeing among staff and teachers. All education personnel should be provided with a basic understanding of PSS. They should also be well briefed on assessment findings.
- **Remember teachers' needs**. It should not be forgotten that educators have physical and psychosocial needs of their own. In many cases, these needs add additional stress to an educator's life and may lead to absenteeism, burnout, and leaving the profession. In emergencies, additional sources of stress may include physical injury, loss of home and public services, loss of a parent or other relatives, heightened poverty, and a sense of vulnerability.

Recovery

- **Create compassionate and healing classrooms** where learners feel safe and supported. Educational environments should enable learners to feel confident, capable, and proud of themselves and their abilities. Teachers should help learners develop healthy social relationships and positive interpersonal skills.
- In the immediate aftermath of a crisis, there might be an urgent need to revise and **enrich the curriculum** to include crisis-related topics and materials. For instance, an enriched curriculum can include

health and safety education, safety drills, life skills, and coping and self-management skills (PSS and SEL). It can also introduce survival skills (safety, health, and nutrition), responsible citizenship, recreational activities, play, and sports. Integrating PSS and SEL into the curriculum can give learners a sense of hope and aspiration.

- **Coordination** between various stakeholders and education actors, including NGOs, is essential. MoEs should cooperate and share information with other ministries to address the PSS needs of learners, teachers, and other education personnel in a holistic and coordinated manner. Inter-sectoral linkages are important in PSS-SEL issues. MoEs should receive technical and capacity-building support as needed.
- Emergencies and crises are unfortunately often cyclical and/or protracted. Therefore, it is important to **identify and plan**, even during the recovery stages, **for elements of preparedness** that will strengthen the system and allow it to cope more effectively with any future crisis. This may require revisiting and adapting medium- and long-term education plans and reallocating budget resources to address weaknesses in the system.

Example from the field

Domain 5: Education policy

Mali: Participating with national authorities and communities to collect data on challenges/needs and strengths/capacities

In 2013, the World Bank worked with Mali's MoE to conduct a rapid resilience assessment. The assessment was used to inform the Ministry's response to the armed conflict in the north and related displacement of people to the south of Mali. A team from the Ministry was trained in how to conduct a systematic resilience assessment. The assessment collected data not just on risks but also on the strengths of the affected communities. Reflecting on the participatory process, an MoE official explained:

Development should stem from the strengthening of the capacities of communities ... to be actors in their own development. When populations, communities themselves, are responsible for their development and the development is conceived of by these communities, it's easily implemented by [them] and is no longer restricted by time or space. And that's why with this resilience study it is extremely important that the assets are not lost, [but are] reinforced ... all these assets can be capitalized upon, supported and can serve as entry points for development ... I found [applying the community participation methodology] to be a process of responsabilization. (World Bank, 2013, p. 2)

REFLECTION POINTS

- **Creating a protective environment** is essential in promoting the psychosocial wellbeing of children and youth. This environment is shaped by children, youth, their parents, extended family, the community, schools, and education authorities, and through policies that seek to protect the emotional needs of children.
- To promote lasting and meaningful education interventions, **PSS and SEL should be part of a systemic approach** and be reflected in a centralized commitment to improving psychosocial wellbeing. **Children's and youths' holistic development and wellbeing should be considered** when formulating policies, and when designing and implementing education-in-crisis programs.
- **Multi-sector approaches are key to creating lasting change for children and young people, and to improving their psychosocial wellbeing and learning outcomes.** Ministries and humanitarian coordination mechanisms should communicate across the education, protection, health, and other relevant sectors.
- The best interventions engage all levels of a social ecology. If an intervention in the education sector is to translate into longer-term resilience, it will require the **leadership and commitment of education authorities.**
- PSS and SEL activities should not wait until a crisis hits. Education **authorities should instead improve their preparedness and resilience** by considering how to mainstream PSS and SEL into the curriculum, and by promoting appropriate pedagogies through training and ongoing support for teaching staff. In crisis-prone areas, it may also be appropriate to consider contingency plans and technological platforms that can be implemented immediately to facilitate access to learning opportunities, even if a crisis hits.

Closing

Humanitarian crises profoundly impact children, youth, and communities and can disrupt every aspect of normal daily life. Without appropriate mitigation, long-term exposure to a crisis can be damaging to the physical and psychosocial wellbeing of children and youth. Schools and other non-formal learning spaces are among the most influential and beneficial environments for children and youth during a period of uncertainty, and as a result, providing educational opportunities during crises is a fundamental component of an effective humanitarian response.

PSS and SEL are essential for the wellbeing and learning of crisis-affected children and youth. This Guidance Note provides an integrated approach to PSS and SEL in educational settings during and following emergencies. It views SEL as an important component of PSS and articulates general principles of both PSS and SEL programming in the education sector. The INEE Minimum Standards provide a comprehensive framework for how to include PSS and SEL at all levels of the education system and throughout all aspects of education planning, preparedness, and response. The Guidance Note also offers specific examples of useful practices that integrate PSS and SEL, along with advice about how to begin implementation. An important part of implementation is the organization of personal and professional educator networks that support holistic programming during crises.

PSS and SEL are closely related components that support crisis-affected children and youth and enable them to learn effectively. Without this critical support, many children and young people will likely be unable to learn to their full capacity. The best teachers motivate their learners to achieve academic excellence while also providing safe spaces for learning and for building academically and emotionally supportive relationships. Accomplishing these goals can be difficult during and after an emergency, but they are not impossible. The introduction of simple PSS and SEL activities along with changes in the way teachers interact with learners can improve the ability of each young person to cope with crisis, recover, and thrive.

Glossary

Child-friendly spaces: Communities create CFS to provide nurturing environments where children can access free and structured play, recreation, leisure, and learning activities. CFS may provide health, nutrition, psychosocial support, and other activities that restore a sense of normality and continuity. They are designed and operated in a participatory manner. They may serve children of a specific age group or a variety of ages.

Coping: Coping is the process of adapting to a new life situation, managing difficult circumstances, making an effort to solve problems, and/or trying to minimize, reduce, or bear with stress or conflict.

Disability: Disability refers to physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments, as well as barriers of attitude and of the environment that prevent an individual's full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Distress: Distress is the state of being upset, anxious, and destabilized. It can occur in response to difficult living conditions, such as poverty and overcrowding, or to threats to one's security or wellbeing.

Education Cluster: The Education Cluster is an open formal forum for coordination and collaboration on education in humanitarian crises. The Education Cluster brings together NGOs, UN agencies, academics, and other partners under the shared goal of ensuring predictable, well-coordinated, and equitable provision of education for populations affected by humanitarian crises. Established in 2007 by the IASC as part of the cluster approach, the Education Cluster works to uphold education as a basic human right and core component of humanitarian response. The Education Cluster is the only cluster that is co-led at a global level by a UN agency and an NGO: UNICEF and Save the Children (Education Cluster, 2018).

Formal education: Formal education refers to learning opportunities provided in a system of schools, colleges, universities, and other educational institutions. It usually involves full-time education for children and young people that begins between ages 5 and 7 and continues to 20 or 25. It is normally developed by national MoEs, but in emergency situations may be supported by other education stakeholders.

Inter-Agency Standing Committee: The IASC is a forum for coordination, policy development, and decision-making within humanitarian assistance. The IASC was established in June 1992 in response to a UN General Assembly Resolution on strengthening humanitarian assistance. The IASC involves key UN and non-UN humanitarian partners.

Non-formal education: Educational activities that do not correspond to the definition of formal education (see separate entry above) are considered non-formal education, which takes place both within and outside educational institutions and caters to people of all ages. It does not always lead to certification. Non-formal education programs are characterized by their variety, flexibility, and ability to respond quickly to children’s or adults’ new educational needs. They often are designed for specific groups of learners, such as those who are too old for their grade level, those who do not attend a formal school, or adults. Curricula may be based on formal education or on new approaches. Examples include accelerated “catch-up” learning, afterschool programs, literacy, and numeracy. Non-formal education may lead to late entry into formal education programs. Late entry is sometimes called second-chance education.

Psychological first aid: PFA describes a humane, supportive response to a fellow human being who is suffering and who may need support. It involves the following themes: providing practical care and support that does not intrude; assessing needs and concerns; helping people address basic needs, such as food and water or information; listening to people but not pressuring them to talk; comforting people and helping them feel calm; helping people connect to information, services, and social supports; protecting people from further harm.

Toxic stress: A toxic-stress response for a child can occur when he/she experiences strong, frequent, and/or prolonged adversity—such as physical or emotional abuse, chronic neglect, caregiver substance abuse or mental illness, exposure to violence, and/or the accumulated burdens of family economic hardship—without adequate adult support. This kind of prolonged activation of the stress-response system can disrupt the development of brain architecture and other organ systems and increase the risk for stress-related disease and cognitive impairment well into the adult years.

Trauma: Trauma is an emotional response to a terrible event, like an accident, rape, death, torture, violence, or a manmade or natural disaster. Immediately after the event, shock and denial are typical. Longer-term reactions include unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships, and even physical symptoms like headaches or nausea. While these feelings are normal, some people have difficulty coping. This is also known as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which is a mental health condition always diagnosed by a mental health professional. Using the word “trauma” should always refer to PTSD; if not diagnosed, another expression should be used, such as distress, stress, anguish, or the psychological effects of emergencies. See more examples in the *Community Based Psychosocial Support Training Manual* (ACT Alliance, 2015, p. 36). Psychologists can help individuals suffering from PTSD find constructive ways to manage their emotions and deal with the event(s).

Youth-friendly spaces: YFS are safe, nurturing, and enabling environments that facilitate and support the holistic development and transformation of young people. Young people are involved in the design, implementation, and management of these spaces. The spaces provide a full range of accessible and affordable services and quality care in an atmosphere where young people are treated with respect and dignity, are guaranteed confidentiality, and receive services from non-judgmental professional staff.

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