Promoting Social and Emotional Learning in the Classroom

A GUIDE TO EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES IN LOW- AND MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES

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Introduction

Background Purpose of the Guidebook

Since 2018, bilateral and multilateral development agencies have increasingly embraced social and emotional learning (SEL) as a key component of their basic education strategies,[1] for several reasons:

> Social and emotional learning is defined as the "processes by which children and adults acquire and apply core competencies to recognize and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, appreciate the perspectives of others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, make responsible decisions, and handle personal and interpersonal situations constructively." [2]

1. While access to basic education has improved greatly in recent decades, this has not translated into increased learning.[3] Thus, technicians and policy makers are examining approaches beyond academic instruction that can improve the learning environment in a way that enhances students' well-being, retention, and academic achievement.
2. Education stakeholders understand the importance of holistic development for a child's success later in life. While foundational literacy and numeracy are essential building blocks and predictive factors for learning in upper primary and beyond, social and emotional development is an equally critical building block for a child's success in the classroom, at work, and as a contributing member of society.[4]
3. SEL programs contribute to resilient systems, teachers, and students.[5] In a world where natural disasters are frequent, pandemics shut down school systems, and protracted crises occur across many countries (especially low- and middle-income countries), a "steady state" of education is no longer the norm. Children and teachers are often forced to learn in fragile contexts amidst great uncertainty. Strong social and emotional competencies are critical for children (and their teachers) to be resilient in the face of such shocks.
4. Research is rapidly developing that suggests that schools have a role to play in supporting children's sense of well-being, providing safe learning environments and child protection, helping to build coping skills, and supporting children's positive social and emotional development as a way to mitigate children's prior adverse experiences.[6]

The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the global education system has further reinforced the importance of weaving SEL into basic education programs. Currently, 70% of ten-year-olds in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) cannot read or understand basic text, compared to an estimated 53% before the pandemic.[7] As noted by UNICEF's chief of education, "While the disruptions to learning must end, just reopening schools is not enough. Students need intensive support to recover lost education. Schools must also go beyond places of learning to rebuild children's mental and physical health, social development and nutrition."[8]

The dire state of global education post-COVID-19 has highlighted the critical need to "build back better." This guidebook addresses that need by providing a compilation of evidence-based SEL interventions that can be adapted across different contexts. It answers the following question: What SEL interventions in LMICs were part of a program with demonstrated effectiveness and can be adapted across contexts?

Much has been written about SEL, and many programs have been implemented;[9] however, many of these programs lack evidence of impact. Where evidence exists, the journal articles reporting it typically describe interventions only briefly, with insufficient detail to guide other implementers to pick up and adapt. Furthermore, the bulk of this evidence base is from higher-income countries. This guidebook thus examines SEL programs designed for education in LMICs and in emergency or conflict settings that were part of programs with evidence of effectiveness; identifies commonalties across them; and provides recommendations on how to combine different approaches to SEL.

Any program manager or education project tasked with designing or implementing an SEL program or intervention[*] can use this guidebook to create a program that works for their context.

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[*] This guidebook uses the term "program" to mean a compilation of interventions and activities, such as an early grade reading program. An intervention is one component of a program and comprises several activities.

Methodology and Organization of Guidebook

This guidebook builds on much previous work in this area. In particular, it builds on the systematic review of emerging evidence on SEL interventions and programs commissioned by USAID in 2020.[10] This review included SEL interventions and programs designed to target a variety of outcomes, including academic success, well-being, health, social and emotional competencies, and resiliency.[11] In the development of this guidebook, we drew on the systematic review to identify specific interventions—those focusing on *academic* and *SEL* outcomes and those with strong evidence of effectiveness—within programs that had undergone experimental or quasi-experimental evaluation. In most cases, there is no evidence isolating the effect of a specific intervention by itself, but there is evidence of the larger program encompassing the intervention (e.g., Brain Games). Throughout the guidebook, we are explicit about the quality of evidence supporting each intervention. We also found several effective programs that did not have detailed documentation publicly available. For these, we interviewed the researchers who developed the programs to gather additional information. In total, we reviewed 150 programs that had an SEL intervention— from the systematic review of emerging evidence on SEL—eight of which met the criteria for this guidebook and are discussed herein.

Many SEL programs are the combination of several discrete interventions. To give implementers maximum flexibility, our guidance focuses on one intervention at a time rather than on a cluster of interventions that make up a program. For example, the Journeys SEL Program from Uganda[12] focuses on establishing a safe and supportive school environment as a pathway toward improving retention and preventing violence against children in schools and fostering student SEL through child-directed activities in an extracurricular program (found in Category 2 of this guidebook) and through targeted work with teachers, school staff, and community members (found in Category 3 of this guidebook). The staff, community, and student interventions were designed to be conducted in tandem as part of the comprehensive Journeys SEL Program. However, for ease of use, we present the child-directed activities and staff activities separately since they were distinct interventions.

The guidebook groups the interventions into three broad categories according to their overall approach (see **Table 1**). Where different effective programs have implemented similar interventions, we have integrated the description into one narrative, highlighting commonlaties across programs. The rationale for this is to produce generalized (not program-specific) descriptions of effective interventions. For programs developed outside of RTI, we supplemented published material with interviews with program developers. Where we did this, we offered program developers the opportunity to review our description.

Table 1. SEL approaches and interventions

SEL approach	Common unit of focus	Relevant interventions (name of intervention, country of implementation, and developer of intervention)
SEL integrated into the classroom	Teacher instructional practices	**Intervention name:** Mindset Intervention **Country:** Brazil **Developed by:** Tassia Cruz of the Fundação Getulio Vargas think-tank
		Intervention name: Healing Classrooms **Countries:** Democratic Republic of Congo & Lebanon **Developed by:** International Rescue Committee
Child-centered SEL activities	Activities for students	**Intervention name:** Brain Games **Countries:** Argentina, Brazil, Lebanon, Niger, Nigeria, & Uganda **Developed by:** Harvard EASEL Lab
		Intervention name: Healing Classrooms **Countries**: Lebanon & Niger **Developed by:** International Rescue Committee
		Intervention name: Journeys for Pupils **Country:** Uganda **Developed by**: RTI & USAID/Literacy Achievement and Retention Activity
		Intervention name: Grow Your Mind Growth Mindset **Country:** Peru **Developed by:** researchers Outes-Leon, Sánchez, & Vakis
		Intervention name: Eminyeeto Girls Empowerment Program **Country:** Uganda **Developed by:** researchers Malhotra, Ayele, Zheng, & Amor
School climate	The school	**Intervention name:** Journeys for Teachers and School Staff and Journeys for Community Members **Country:** Uganda **Developed by:** RTI & USAID/Literacy Achievement and Retention Activity
		Intervention name: Healing Classrooms **Countries**: Democratic Republic of Congo, Lebanon, & Niger **Developed by:** International Rescue Committee

The guidebook is organized according to the three categories of SEL approaches outlined in Table 1. For each intervention, we describe the following:

· Background and rationale for including the selected intervention
· Existing evidence for the intervention
· Brief description of the intervention's implementation
· More detailed guide to conducting activities

Evidence-Based Activities

Category 1: SEL Integrated into the Classroom

This section describes effective past interventions in LMICs, including emergency and conflict settings, that infused SEL skills into classroom pedagogy and curriculum content. These are integrated interventions that aim to ensure that children's daily experience at school—through their interactions with the teacher and the subject matter of their lessons—supports their socio-emotional learning. This contrasts with approaches that devote time specifically to SEL activities (see Category 2). Implementers of these integrated interventions recognized the important role that teachers can play in creating classroom environments that are safe spaces where children can thrive mentally and academically. They also recognize the opportunities to learn about SEL in the content of subjects throughout the curriculum.

While this category—integrating SEL into the classroom—is often implemented in crisis, post-crisis, and humanitarian settings, it is also useful in non-crisis settings due to its focus, among other things, on improving academic outcomes.

MINDSET INTERVENTION WITH TEACHERS, BRAZIL

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Mindset interventions are based on Carol Dweck's work on "mindsets," which finds that individuals' response to intellectual challenges depends on their beliefs about whether intelligence is fixed or malleable.[13] The "fixed" mindset sees intelligence as innate and unchanging, while the "growth" mindset views the brain as malleable and believes that intelligence grows with academic effort. Several studies in high-income settings have found that students can be encouraged to adopt growth mindsets when presented with evidence about the nature of intelligence and, as a result, improve their academic performance.

In LMICs, the limited evidence available suggests that mindset interventions may be particularly effective at changing students' beliefs and academic achievement in situations of social vulnerability.[14] In all contexts, most mindset interventions have been targeted directly at students. However, it is possible that changing teachers' beliefs about their own abilities and the abilities of their students could also improve their teaching practice and, consequently, student outcomes.

EVIDENCE

In Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, a program designed by Tassia Cruz of the Fundação Getulio Vargas think-tank targeting fifth grade teachers in public schools was successful in encouraging teachers to embrace growth mindsets.[15] As a result, teachers' classroom practice changed, with improved classroom culture and more time using interactive pedagogy, as measured by TEACH+.[16] There was also a subsequent improvement in students' performance in Portuguese and mathematics.

IMPLEMENTATION

The intervention in Rio de Janeiro was conducted with fifth grade teachers who were responsible for teaching all subjects across the grade. Teachers gathered in groups of about 20 for a two-hour session with two trainers from the Secretariat of Education. Sessions were conducted weekly for five weeks during March and April 2019.

GUIDE TO CONDUCTING ACTIVITY

The structure of a mindset intervention generally consists of five workshops with teachers conducted over a five-week period. Each workshop has a different learning goal, as described below.

Workshop 1 **Introduction to the theory on growth mindset.** Workshop 1 has two main learning objectives: (1) getting to know the human brain and (2) reflecting on how our mindset affects learning. To achieve these objectives, the workshop explores the contrast between a fixed mindset and a growth mindset. It then discusses the benefits of a growth mindset, which views the brain as a muscle that grows in strength the more it exercises and allows individuals to maximize their potential. Teachers discuss practical examples of how a growth mindset affects learning in the classroom.

Workshop 2 **Mistakes as a gift.** Workshop 2 has two main learning objectives: (1) understanding how different interpretations can be ascribed to the process of making mistakes and (2) realizing the importance of errors in the learning process. Someone with a fixed mindset believes that mistakes show that a person is not capable. Students with this mindset may, for example, make fun of those making mistakes. Meanwhile, those with a growth mindset see mistakes as an opportunity to learn. The addition of the word "yet" is important in this context. Rather than saying "I cannot solve this mathematics exercise," students can be encouraged to say "I cannot solve this mathematics exercise ... yet." This workshop introduces the concept that others can influence students' mindsets. If parents, peers, or teachers, for example, think that a student cannot learn mathematics, this influences their ability to learn mathematics.

Workshop 3 **Frustration.** Workshop 3 has two main learning objectives: (1) discovering strategies to help students deal with frustration and (2) understanding that learning is a journey full of mistakes and frustrations. As students make mistakes, they might get frustrated with the learning process. During the workshop, teachers are shown strategies to help students deal with their frustration and persist with their learning, based on their belief in the growth mindset. The nature of frustration may be different for children from vulnerable contexts. Therefore, teachers must not unintentionally reinforce students' beliefs that they cannot learn by trying to sympathize with students when frustrated (by saying, for example, "Don't worry, not everyone can do this.").

Workshop 4 **Effort and stereotypes.** Workshop 4 has two main learning objectives: (1) understanding that effort can produce advances in the learning process and (2) understanding that stereotypes are flexible and can be modified. The first part of this workshop discusses one implication of the growth mindset—that learning requires effort. Understanding this message can help students persist in their work to understand a concept, rather than giving up when frustrated. The second part of the workshop discusses the role of stereotypes—such as those based on poverty, gender, or race—and their relation to beliefs about intelligence. Teachers are taught how the threat of negative stereotypes reduces an individual's performance on a given task and how the legitimization of negative stereotypes in the classroom increases the chances of failure in school learning. At the end of the workshop, teachers are given an exercise to carry out with their students and are asked to write a reflection on how well it went. This gives teachers practical experience in using the concept of a growth mindset with their students and allows them to learn from the experiences of other teachers.

Workshop 5 **Dealing with stereotypes in the classroom.** Workshop 5 has one main learning objective: to establish a connection between the stereotype threat and the mindset theory. This session discusses self-fulfilling prophecies, particularly those whereby socially vulnerable students are not placed in challenging learning situations because they are expected to fail, and therefore fail to learn. It then reviews all of the concepts learned throughout the five workshops.

Each of the five sessions involves the following components:

· Energizers or readings
· Presentation of content
· Discussion with teachers
· Exercises focused on how to work with students
· Homework (e.g., a reading prompting teachers to think about the stereotypes that prevent children from learning)

HEALING CLASSROOMS INTERVENTION WITH TEACHERS, NIGER AND LEBANON

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The International Rescue Committee's Healing Classrooms program aims to foster children's well-being and SEL as well as their academic learning. The program achieves this through teachers' adoption of classroom techniques encompassing five core principles: developing children's sense of self-control, developing their sense of belonging, developing their sense of self-worth, building positive social relationships, and developing intellectually stimulating classroom environments.

EVIDENCE

The IRC Healing Classroom program has been evaluated to date in three contexts. The program was implemented in primary schools in both the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Niger. In the DRC, the program had marginally significant positive effects on reading scores and geometry scores but not on arithmetic scores.[17] The intervention improved mathematics scores to the greatest extent for language-minority students and low-performing schools. The intervention also had a positive effect on students' perceptions of supportive and caring schools and classrooms, a negative impact on their sense of predictability and cooperation, and no effect on students' subjective well-being. In Niger, the Healing Classrooms program included two additional interventions—Brain Games and Mindfulness (see descriptions in Category 2). The combination of interventions led to improved literacy and numeracy scores and academic grades.[18] In Lebanon, a similar intervention was adapted for non-formal remediation for primary-school-aged Syrian refugees. In this study, 16 weeks of SEL-infused non-formal remediation had an impact on some literacy and numeracy subtests.[19] The intervention also improved students' perception of the school environment; reduced school-related stress, internalization of symptoms, and stress reactivity; and improved behavioral regulation.

IMPLEMENTATION

This is a two-year program. Teachers are trained to implement the Healing Classroom approach during five- to six-day workshops, which combine coaching, academic instruction, and teacher learning circles. This facilitates teachers' absorption and implementation of the five key principles. In the first year of the program, teachers implement these instructional approaches that focus either on only using the healing classroom approach or using it combined with a 30-minute daily mindfulness instruction. In the second year of the program, teachers implement a SEL curriculum that targets skills such as brain building, conflict resolution, and positive social skills.[20]

GUIDE TO CONDUCTING ACTIVITY

Guidelines for conducting Healing Classroom activities in this and subsequent sections are adapted from the Healing Classrooms Facilitator's Guide[21] and the Safe Healing and Learning Spaces Toolkit[22] and are reproduced courtesy of the International Rescue Committee. The Healing Classrooms training is conducted in several sessions that follow the same format. Day one consists of an introduction to the concept of well-being for teachers and students. Each subsequent session covers a key principle and two to three accompanying teaching techniques. All of the sessions consist of an introductory brainstorming activity, the watching and unpacking of video clips depicting teachers using the technique in real classroom contexts, a discussion, and the practice of and reflection on the techniques.

Session 1	**Promoting student and teacher well-being.** This session explains what well-being means and how it can be fostered through classroom instructional strategies. It also introduces each of the five key principles. The main objective of the session is to discuss what children need to be well and what teachers can do in the classroom to promote well-being among their students. Teachers also learn how to promote their own well-being.
Session 2	**Fostering a sense of control.** During this session, teachers learn about the importance of fostering a sense of control, and how to do so in their classrooms. They also learn about the importance of establishing a sense of predictability and security in classrooms. This can be done by establishing routines, co-creating rules, and using positive and fair discipline.

Session 3   **Creating a sense of belonging.** This session explores how to create classroom climates that promote a sense of belonging. Teachers learn about a variety of techniques, including supporting all learners and developing a sense of community through cooperative projects, calling on all students, encouraging the participation of shy students, cross-age tutoring, and beautifying the classroom and school. Reflection on service and on improving students' overall experience is also encouraged.

Session 4   **Creating a sense of self-worth.** In this session, teachers learn the techniques of giving praise and encouraging goal setting. They are trained on how and when to give praise and possible phrases that they can use to encourage student effort. With regard to goal setting, teachers learn how to teach students how to define goals and the steps needed to achieve them.

Session 5   **Promoting positive social relationships.** This session focuses on implementing effective group work and integrating students' experiences into classroom instruction. Teachers learn to use group work to facilitate students' practice of new skills and to assess their understanding and knowledge of a topic. Teachers also learn to connect classroom instruction and content to the lives of their students through questioning and having students discuss or write about their experiences in relation to the topic they are learning and each other's lives.

Session 6   **Promoting intellectually stimulating environments.** In this final session, teachers learn to use questioning and differentiated instruction to create intellectually stimulating classroom environments. For differentiated instruction, teachers learn how to use student-centered and interactive activities such as group work, skits, and storytelling, as well as activities that target students' multiple intelligences. Questioning techniques include asking different types of questions to facilitate students' critical thinking, such as clarification questions, justifying questions, factual questions, and open-ended questions. Teachers also learn how to encourage students to respond even if they are unsure, how to give students wait time to help them formulate their answers, and how to phrase questions clearly.

Category 2: Child-Centered SEL Activities

Explicit child-centered activities implemented either during the classroom or within extracurricular programs focus on building specific social and emotional competencies such as executive function, emotional regulation, and interpersonal skills. For example, the Journeys program student activities take place within after-school group activities, each hosted by a teacher patron. Other activities such as Brain Games, used in the IRC Healing Classrooms program, are designed to take place during regular classroom hours. As stated in the introduction, these activities were designed to be implemented as part of a larger SEL program and are not meant to serve as standalone activities.

BRAIN GAMES, MULTICOUNTRY

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Brain Games[23] are activities designed to improve children's executive function—a family of cognitive processes underpinning deliberate, goal-directed behavior.[24] The games are modular and, as opposed to more comprehensive curricular approaches, can be easily integrated into educational practice. One of the strengths of Brain Games is that they can be adapted to different contexts by making activities culturally appropriate—for example, by using local songs and chants in the games. Using this approach, Brain Games have been used and adapted in other LMICs, including Argentina, Brazil, Lebanon, Nigeria, and Uganda.

Research in high-income countries (although most commonly in low-income settings in those countries) finds that executive function is predictive of future academic achievement in early primary grades.[25] Interventions to support the development of executive function have been shown to improve mathematics achievement scores.[26] The rationale for implementing such interventions in low-income settings is that experiences of early childhood adversity have been shown to impede children's development of executive function.[27] Executive function interventions have been found to improve vocabulary and reasoning and reduce stress among children in high-poverty schools.[28] Among low-income children, strong executive function skills may be protective against the negative effects of early life experiences.[29]

EVIDENCE

There does not appear to be any published evidence from LMICs that isolates the impact of Brain Games on children's learning outcomes. There is, however, evidence from studies in which Brain Games were combined with other interventions. For example, the IRC Healing Classrooms program implemented in primary schools in Niger[30] found positive impacts of a combination of interventions, including Brain Games. As part of this program, students at public schools were exposed to 11 weeks of Brain Games activities, followed by 11 weeks of mindfulness activities. In parallel, students received four hours of academic tutoring each week for 22 weeks, and their teachers were trained to adopt SEL principles. In comparison with a control group attending non-intervened public schools, the package of interventions resulted in improved literacy and numeracy scores and academic grades. The mindfulness and Brain Games activities combined had the impact of improving grades over and above the academic tutoring plus the adoption of SEL principles.

In the United States, Brain Games have been found to have positive impacts on several measures of executive function and self-regulation among preschool and elementary school children.[31] The evidence to date thus suggests that Brain Games are a promising intervention for improving literacy, numeracy, and academic achievement.

IMPLEMENTATION

In Niger, teachers received a five-day training on how to incorporate SEL principles into their teaching, as well as an additional two days of training on the Brain Games intervention. Brain Games were implemented three times per tutoring session, mainly in between subject transitions, totaling 30 minutes per day three times per week for 11 weeks. In each session, teachers were able to choose from among 20 games.

GUIDE TO CONDUCTING ACTIVITY

Brain Games consist of short, modular activities, designed to be played as "games" by students with the aim of developing three executive function skills, referred to as "brain powers": (1) focus power (flexibility of attention deployment); (2) remember power (working memory); and (3) stop and think power (inhibitory control). Each game is intended to be preceded by an explanation of its purpose and an introduction to the "brain power" of the day; the game is then followed by a debrief and discussion.

Three examples of Brain Games are described in detail below, courtesy of the Harvard EASEL Lab.[32] A full description of all games can be found at https://ggie.berkeley.edu/practice/brain-games-a-set-of-sel-kernels-practices/.

I Spy

The teacher says, "I spy with my little eyes something that is ____" (choose a color or shape to describe an object in the room). Students look and point at what they think the object is. This process—deliberately orienting and shifting attention—is known as focus power.

- Before playing, ask students to put on their "focus binoculars" to help them see clearly. You can ask this figuratively, or ask students literally to bring their hands up like binoculars around their eyes.

- Explain that using your "focus power" means using not just your eyes to see clearly, but also your ears to hear clearly and your brain to tune out distractions.

- After playing, talk to students about times when they felt distracted or frustrated during the game. Ask for suggestions on how they re-centered their attention.

- Discuss with students when else it's important during school to use their focus power.

The Name Game

Students stand in a circle. One by one, each student says his or her name and does a motion along with it. The rest of the class then repeats the name with the motion as a group, ultimately trying to remember and repeat all names and motions. The researchers refer to these skills—mentally keeping track and updating information—as remember power.

- Before playing, talk about why it's so important to remember things during the school day.

- Explain that you need to use your "remember power" for everything: tying your shoes, working on a math problem, or knowing how to get to your friend's house.

- After playing, ask students what made the game hard or easy for them.

- Discuss tips and tricks to remember important information and routines, and talk about times during the day when it's especially important to use your remember power.

Simon Says

Students follow the teacher's directions and movements, but only when the teacher says "Simon says" first. The skills involved here—inhibiting an automatic impulse, or replacing the impulse with some other action—are called stop and think power.

- Before playing, explain to students how our brains tell our bodies when and how to move.

- Talk about "stop and think power," and all the times during the day — playing football, waiting in line, or writing a story — when students need to stop and think before acting.

- After playing, ask students what they did to keep themselves from moving during the game. Ask what it felt like when they were trying not to move.

- Offer suggestions for ways to stop and think throughout the school day, such as taking deep breaths or counting quietly.

MINDFULNESS INTERVENTION, NIGER AND LEBANON

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Mindfulness activities have been used in humanitarian contexts where children may have been exposed to conflict, internal displacement, or forced migration, leading to stress that may affect learning. Such activities are designed, in part, to help regulate physiological responses to stress[33] and to improve emotional and behavioral regulation.[34] Mindfulness practices can also increase attentional capacity[35] and attention span.[36] There is evidence from high-income contexts that mindfulness-based interventions in schools can reduce stress and improve cognitive performance.[37]

The IRC Healing Classrooms' mindfulness activities entail breathing techniques, attention to sensory stimulation, and attention to the present environment. There are three types of activities (23 activities in all): (1) discovering, focusing on body and emotion awareness; (2) experimenting, focusing on students' understanding of how different movements and sensations change how they feel; and (3) accepting, focusing on more complex activities that require students to be still for longer periods of time and aware of their surroundings. Teachers are free to choose which of the 23 mindfulness activities they implement on any given day.

EVIDENCE

The clearest evidence for mindfulness comes from the IRC Healing Classrooms program in two contexts, where mindfulness has been implemented in combination with other approaches. One instance of the program implemented in primary schools in Niger found positive impacts of a combination of interventions, including mindfulness.[38] This evidence comes from the same study reported above for the Brain Games intervention. Students were given 11 weeks of mindfulness activities, preceded by 11 weeks of Brain Games activities, with three 30-minute sessions each week for both activities. In parallel, students received six hours of academic tutoring each week for 22 weeks, and their teachers were trained to adopt SEL principles. In comparison with a control group that did not receive any intervention, the package of interventions improved literacy and numeracy scores and academic grades. The mindfulness and Brain Games activities combined had the impact of improving grades over and above the academic tutoring plus the adoption of SEL principles.

In Lebanon, a similar intervention was adapted for non-formal remediation for primary-school-aged Syrian refugees.[39] In this study, 16 weeks of SEL-infused non-formal remediation had an impact on some literacy and numeracy subtests. There was also some evidence of an impact of an additional 16 weeks of mindfulness activities on children's emotional regulation.

IMPLEMENTATION

In both Niger and Lebanon, teachers received a five-day training on the basic Healing Classrooms intervention, as well as an additional two days of training on the mindfulness intervention. The mindfulness activities took place in three ten-minute periods per day, three days each week, in subject-matter transitions or at the start and end of each day. The intervention lasted 11 weeks in Niger and 16 weeks in Lebanon.

GUIDE TO CONDUCTING ACTIVITY

Mindfulness activities begin with an introduction to the activity before children are invited to sit or stand in a comfortable position. They are then guided to breathe into their bellies, slowly and deeply. After this introduction, activities focus on either movement or still visualization. Movement activities instruct children through specific motions, inviting them to notice how it feels in the body and mind. Visualization activities guide children to imagine something—for example, a light that is moving from one part of their body to another, eventually lighting up their whole body. After the specific instructions, all activities end with an invitation for children to slowly bring their awareness back into the space they are in, followed by a reflection discussion. Below are examples of five mindfulness activities.

Note: For all mindfulness activities, the following scripts should be read in a slow, calm, and soothing voice.

1. Tense and Release—Heat

- **Say:** Now we will take one minute to sit silently.

- **Say:** Grow your back longer and taller, reaching your head to the sky. Breathe in deeply. Exhale slowly and let yourself relax. Squeeze up your toes, and release them, feeling heat come out of your toes. Squeeze the muscles in your legs and knees, now let them fully relax and feel the heat coming out of your legs. Squeeze up your bottom and then let the heat warm up your chair as you relax. Pull your tummy muscles in, then release them and feel the warmth radiate out. Feel your chest tighten up, and then relax, releasing heat. Shrug your shoulders up to your ears, then relax your shoulders down your back, feeling the heat come out. Tense up your arms, then relax them and let the heat come out of your fingertips. Feel the heat come up your neck and wrap around your head. Feel your whole body warm and relaxed.

- **Do:** Let the children sit silently for 30 seconds, or as long as they are comfortable.

- **Say:** Now bring your attention back to the class. Wiggle your fingers and your toes. Make small circles with your wrists. Stretch your arms up to the sky and then shake them out. If your eyes are closed, slowly, gently open them.

- **Discuss:** How did the activity feel in your body and mind? What did you learn? How can you use this in your life?

2. Focus on the Light

- **Say:** Now we will take one minute to sit silently and visualize. If you are comfortable, feel free to close your eyes.

- **Say:** Grow your back longer and taller, reaching your head to the sky. Breathe in through your nose, feeling your breath relax your body. Imagine that you see a light in front of your eyes. Bring that light up to your forehead. Allow the light into your head, filling your entire head with bright, warm light. Where this bright light exists, there cannot be darkness. There is only room for happy thoughts. Feel as the light pushes out any bad thoughts. Only good thoughts are left in your mind. See the light moving down to your ears, so you can only hear good things. See the light moving into your jaw and mouth. Let yourself only speak good words. Let the light travel down your neck and shoulders to your heart. Let your heart be filled with the light, so you can feel only good feelings. Feel as the light is shining out from your heart and you are showering everyone and everything around you with good feelings. Feel as your whole body is filled with the light, so you are glowing in good thoughts and feelings. Think, "The light is in me, I am the light. I shine light on everyone and everything around me."

- **Do:** Allow the children a few seconds of silence.

- **Say:** Begin to bring yourself back to the present. Focus on your breathing—in and out slowly. Wiggle your fingers and toes. As you are ready, open your eyes if you closed them.

- **Discuss:** How did the activity feel in your body and mind? What did you learn? How can you use this in your life?

3. Sensory Awareness

- **Adaptation:** If there is space, the floor is clean, it is culturally appropriate, and children are comfortable, invite all of the children to lie down on their backs with their full bodies relaxed.

- **Say:** Close your eyes and begin to calm your breathing. We are going to calm our minds and our bodies and become aware of our senses during the quiet. Begin to relax your entire body.

- **Do:** Instruct the children through slow belly-breathing to calm their breathing.

- **Say**: (very slowly, with pauses) Notice the feelings in your body ... the sounds you hear ... the scents you smell ... the taste in your mouth ... the colors you see as your eyes are closed.

- **Say:** Continue to be aware of the feelings, sounds, scents, tastes and sights you sense as you are quiet and calm. Be aware of them and let them sit. Do not try to change them. Become comfortable with your senses.

- **Do:** Allow the children a minute of silence to observe their senses.

- **Say:** Begin to bring yourself back to the present. Focus on your breathing—in and out slowly. Wiggle your

fingers and toes. As you are ready, open your eyes if you closed them.

- **Ask:** What did you feel while you were quiet and your eyes were closed? Hear? Smell? Taste? See?

- **Discuss:** How did the activity feel in your body and mind? What did you learn? How can you use this in your life?

4. Sitting Silently

- **Say:** Now we will take one minute to sit silently.

- **Say:** Grow your back longer and taller, reaching your head to the sky. Breathe calmly. Continue to breathe slowly for one minute. If it is comfortable, you can close your eyes and think about the daily intention.

- **Do:** Allow the children 30 seconds to one minute (depending on their ability to sit still) to sit silently.

- **Discuss:** How did the activity feel in your body and mind? What did you learn? How can you use this in your life?

5. Shake Everything Off

- **Say:** Let's first shake out our arms. Shake out your hands, wrists, arms, and elbows all the way up to your shoulders. Feel like anything on your mind is coming out of your fingertips.

- **Do:** Shake your arms and encourage all of the children to shake their arms.

- **Say:** Now let's shake out our legs. Shake out your feet, ankles, calves, knees, and thighs all the way up to your hips. Feel like your walk to school is coming out of your toes.

- **Do:** Shake your legs and encourage all of the children to shake their legs.

- **Say:** Now let's put it all together and shake everything out. Shake your arms, your legs, your head, your hips. Shake your entire body to let go of anything.

- **Do:** Demonstrate shaking your entire body and encourage all of the children to shake their entire bodies.

- **Say:** Now stand completely still. Stand tall like a tree. Keep your body entirely still. Reach the top of your head like leaves reach for the sun. Stand a little bit taller.

- **Adaptation:** If there are no trees in your context, change the analogy to one the children understand. For example: Try to grow taller by reaching the top of your head to the sky; or reach taller like a giraffe reaching for food.

- **Discuss:** How did the activity feel in your body and mind? What did you learn? How can you use this in your life?
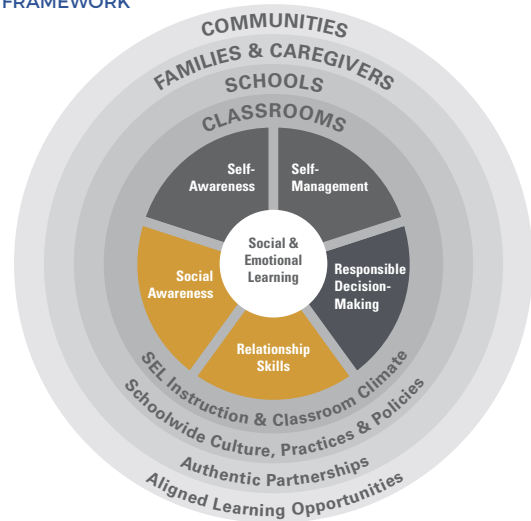
JOURNEYS FOR PUPILS, UGANDA

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The Journeys student SEL activities were designed to provide targeted social and emotional development to primary school students in Uganda. Activities addressed SEL competencies per the CASEL SEL framework—used in high- and middle-income countries—and were designed by Ugandan stakeholders to ensure contextual relevance. Activities included drama, art, solo work, and group work that fostered students' development of the five social and emotional competencies given by this framework: relationship skills, self-management, emotional regulation, responsible decision-making, and social awareness.*

EVIDENCE

Evidence is based on a randomized controlled trial with repeated measures, which tracked student behavioral change from grade 2 to grade 3, comparing students in schools participating in both the Journeys and early grade reading interventions and in control schools. Findings showed that students' experience of corporal punishment and bullying decreased more for students in treatment (Journeys) schools than in control schools. A higher proportion of students from schools participating in both the Journeys and early grade reading interventions were promoted (i.e., did not repeat grades) than students in schools that had only the reading intervention (i.e., not Journeys) or students in control schools.[40] Finally, school climate was shown to mediate stronger shifts in students' SEL, corporal punishment, and bullying from grade 2 to grade 3. School climates that were perceived by students to be more positive resulted in greater increases in SEL scores after one year and greater decreases in corporal punishment and bullying experience.[41] Teacher and student comments from focus group discussions reported improved social and emotional skills among teachers and students. Students and teachers themselves indicated that teachers were more approachable, understanding, and less likely to use corporal punishment after one year of participation in the Journeys program. Students, according to student and teacher comments, were kinder to each other (even among students across grades and sex), more willing to talk about personal matters with teachers, and more participatory in class.

FIGURE 1: CASEL SEL FRAMEWORK

Source: Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-is-the-casel-framework/

IMPLEMENTATION

Journeys for Pupils took place over 13 weeks every trimester and was placed on the school timetable. Students, led by an assigned teacher (called a teacher patron), engaged in one activity per week for a total of 39 activities throughout the school year. Teacher patrons received special training on how to conduct Journeys activities with students and were assigned a cohort of students at their school. LARA has made publicly available its training guide for teacher patrons. Each teacher patron received an activity handbook that addressed three themes: (1) knowing myself, my friends, and my school; (2) building positive relationships and understanding and solving social challenges; and (3) making decisions when facing violence and being a good friend. Within these three themes, children were supported in developing five social emotional competencies given by the CASEL framework. An example of an activity from each theme is copied from the handbook below. The handbooks also provided teacher patrons with guidance on facilitation techniques, how to provide emotional support for students, and how to report cases of violence that were elucidated during activities. Training for teacher patrons also included deep-dives into this guidance.

GUIDE TO CONDUCTING ACTIVITY

Journeys SEL activities comprise three themes based on the CASEL competencies. Below are examples of activities from each theme.

> While the *Journeys Activity Handbook for Pupils* is an excellent example of the types of child-centered activities on which this section of the guidebook focuses, it is important to note that the handbook was not designed to be used in isolation. Rather, it was meant to be used by students in tandem with the other two Journeys handbooks—for teachers and the community, respectively—to develop a school and classroom climate that fostered students' social-emotional development and expression of social-emotional skills. As students engaged in the co-curricular activities provided in the *Journeys Activity Handbook for Pupils*, community members and teachers and school staff would use their respective handbooks to engage in activities that orient them to the learning conditions within a school that promote SEL.

Theme 1 (knowing myself, my friends, and my school) activity example

- **Activity name:** Why I want to be a cow

The purpose of this activity is for students to learn about and appreciate the similarities and differences between themselves and their peers and the different choices that people make. The teacher provides students with a choice of animal, and students select which one they want to be. In groups, students discuss with their peers why they chose the animal they did. The teacher then leads a plenary discussion with students about their choices and what reasons their peers gave for choosing a different animal. Students are asked to think about whether these choices are good, bad, or simply different. The teacher concludes by engaging students about why differences can be something positive.

Theme 2 (building positive relationships, understanding and solving social challenges) activity example

- **Activity name:** Status Game

The objective of this activity is to build social awareness, responsible decision-making ,and self-management skills by role-playing power scenarios. This activity makes students aware that the differences in the status or "power" of two people can lead to violence, especially violence against children in schools. But those with more power (even students) can use these differences in power to help others. Students are assigned a role (e.g., village leader, teacher, student, police, nurse, mother, principal, wealthy business person) at random by the teacher. Students walk around the room and engage in role-play by acting according to the role they were assigned and treating others based on their role. After the activity, the teacher leads a discussion with students about how it felt to be in an assigned position of power. How did it feel to be in a role that often does not have a lot of power? If you were assigned a role that does have a lot of power, how did you treat others?
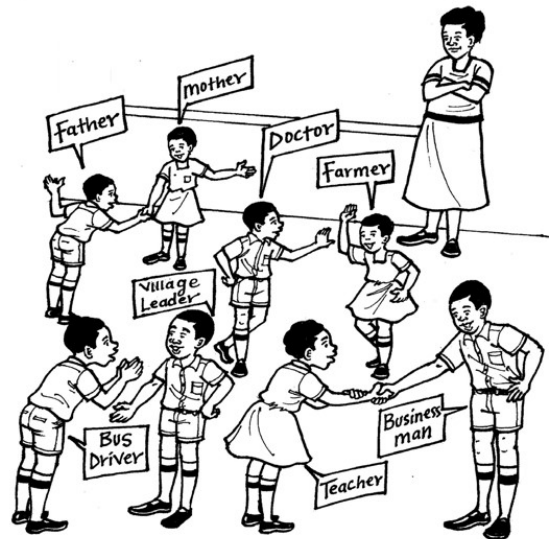
Theme 3 (making decisions when facing violence, being a good friend) activity example

- **Activity name:** Feelings Charades

This activity teaches students self and social awareness by helping them recognize emotions through body language. The teacher patron writes several words on the chalkboard. Without using words, each student acts out one of the emotions written, while the rest of their student group has to guess which emotion they are trying to portray. At the end of the charade, the teacher patron leads students in a discussion about how and when they recognized someone was feeling a certain way (sad, angry, happy, etc.), and how they felt when they realized someone was feeling that way.
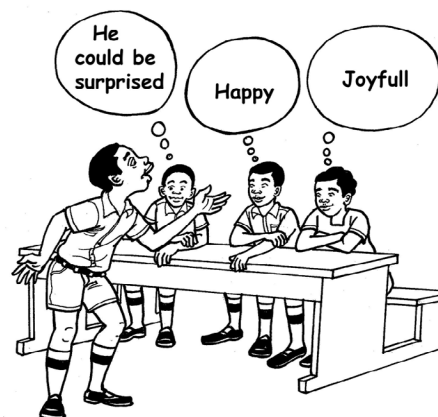
MINDSET INTERVENTION WITH STUDENTS, PERU

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Research on student self-intelligence posits that student self-theories of their intelligence can be modified and have an impact on their motivation, efforts and academic achievement.[42] Using this premise, researchers Outes-Leon, Sánchez, and Vakis developed the Grow Your Mind (GYM) intervention in Peru, which aimed to improve the growth mindset of students who were moving into the early secondary grades.[43] Noting the dearth of evidence in LMICs on the impact of a growth mindset on, the researchers sought to explore the potential effects of a growth mindset intervention in three regions of Peru.

EVIDENCE

For the GYM intervention in Peru, researchers used the results of student examinations in reading comprehension and mathematics two and fourteen months after the intervention to assess the impact of the intervention on students' performance in these two subjects. Two months after the intervention, students' math scores improved by 5%. Fourteen months after the intervention, student scores in the subjects of mathematics, reading comprehension, and history, and economics and geography improved by 10%, 12%, and 10%, respectively.[44]

IMPLEMENTATION

The GYM intervention was conducted across 400 hundred schools in urban and peri-urban areas in three regions of Peru. Researchers sent each school a packet with GYM resource materials that teachers needed to implement the intervention. Each package contained the following:

- A letter signed by senior administrators of the Ministry of Education for the head teachers of sample schools, describing the intervention and asking the school to participate in the study
- Letters to teachers who would implement the intervention
- Step-by-step instructions on how the intervention activities were to be conducted
- A document with more information on the growth mindset and examples of how to motivate students
- Copies of the GYM text for all students
- Posters for each classroom

At each school, seventh and eighth grade teachers held a 90-minute session in which they drew on the GYM resource materials package to introduce students to the concept of a growth mindset and to lead activities aimed at enhancing comprehension. Subsequently, in a follow-up session, teachers hung students' work on the classroom wall. Implementation of the project was monitored by phone.

GUIDE TO CONDUCTING ACTIVITY

The 90-minute session is divided into three 30-minute sections. During the first section, teachers introduce students to the concept of a growth mindset. This is done using a "grow your mind" article that students read on their own. The title of the article asks the question, "Did you know you could grow your intelligence?" In the second section, students are placed into groups of four or five to debate the content of the text. Teachers then conduct a whole-group debate about the growth mindset. During the final section, students write letters to a friend or relative describing what they have learned.

In a follow-up session, teachers post students' letters on the wall, along with a poster titled "Exercise your mind—improve your intelligence. With practice and effort, you can." Teachers are encouraged to keep the letters and poster on the wall for the duration of the academic year to serve as a reminder to students.

EMINYEETO GIRLS EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM, UGANDA

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The Eminyeeto Girls Empowerment Program addressed the challenges of girls' education in Uganda, especially in the areas of enrollment, retention, academic performance, and school completion, as well as social-emotional pathologies such as lack of self-esteem, lack of self-efficacy, and gender-inequitable attitudes. Eminyeeto, which means youth in Runyankore, was created and tailored to develop SEL skills and to "strengthen the social, financial, and emotional empowerment of girls and young women" in selected schools in southwestern Uganda.[45]

EVIDENCE

For this quasi-experimental study, researchers used standardized scales that measure social-emotional outcomes. Questionnaires were used to collect students' social-emotional outcomes. Baseline data and endline data were collected for the intervention. After a year, the endline data demonstrated that students in treatment schools improved across all of the SEL domains evaluated. These domains were self-management, self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

IMPLEMENTATION

The program evaluated the outcomes for 214 girl participants from treatment schools and 66 from control schools. The participants were enrolled in grades 1–7, with their ages ranging from 12 to 17 years old. The topic-based lessons took place after school and focused on SEL competencies that were taught for one hour every week. Lessons consisted of activities, games, and a 25–30-minute reflection and debriefing to determine how the participants were understanding and processing what they had learned.

GUIDE TO CONDUCTING ACTIVITY

The SEL curriculum consists of lessons and activities self-management, self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

Self-management

Lessons on this topic help participants focus on their beliefs and how beliefs can affect feelings and behaviors. They learn how to regulate their emotions, control their impulses, and have a growth mindset.

- **Activities:** Activities in this category use physical and mental exercises to promote stress and time management. Other skills taught for this topic include how to listen and learning about and how to persevere.

Self-awareness

These lessons seek to have the students have confidence and use their self-awareness to learn new skills.

- **Activities:** Activities include identifying emotions and trauma using a ball game. During this lesson, participants are also encouraged to identify their positive qualities and their achievements.

Social awareness

These lessons teach participants about empathy and understanding diverse perspectives.

- **Activities:** Students are encouraged to work collaboratively with peers and learned about and how to listen to the opinions of others, share their own opinions, and identify and question gender roles. Participants also learn about cooperative storytelling and discuss the need to respect others.

Relationship skills

These lessons facilitate the development of relationship skills that helped students recognize and sustain positive and healthy relationships. They learn about cooperation, communication, how to look for help and support, and how to provide these things to others.

- **Activities:** The students learn and practice the skills of critical thinking, sharing opinions, and expressing their thoughts using non-verbal communication. Students also use a steppingstone game to promote strategic teamwork.

Responsible decision-making

These lessons center around ethics, making ethical choices, personal accountability, and careful evaluation of choices.

- **Activities:** Activities include how to make responsible decisions and set long- and short-term goals.

COLORS OF KINDNESS

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

In crisis and conflict settings, school-based interventions can combine approaches for SEL and psychosocial support to support student well-being; mitigate the effects of trauma; promote resilience; and provide a sense of stability and normalcy during uncertain and volatile times. The Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies considers SEL to fall under the umbrella of psychosocial support given that SEL can be a vehicle for promoting psychosocial well-being in both formal and informal educational settings.[46]

Amal Alliance's Colors of Kindness intervention combines SEL and psychosocial support for children in crisis contexts to build seven skills that promote and reinforce resilience: self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship building, social awareness, creativity, and environmental stewardship. Colors of Kindness provides teachers with foundational content on these seven skills and guides them in the delivery of play-based activities across six modalities: yoga, dance, mindfulness, play, art therapy, and gratitude. Colors of Kindness is an award-winning program with demonstrated evidence of impact and replicability across contexts.

FIGURE 2. THE SIX DELIVERY MODALITIES OF COLORS OF KINDNESS

KIDS YOGA | DANCE | MINDFULNESS

PLAY | ART THERAPY | GRATITUDE

EVIDENCE

Amal Alliance has piloted Colors of Kindness in three countries: Bangladesh, Greece, and Uganda. The first pilot, in Bangladesh, was conducted with children in host and refugee communities over a 10-week period in October–December 2020. Children who participated in the pilot showed an average 16.5% increase in SEL competency and an improvement in learning outcomes.[47] The second pilot, also a 10-week program, took place from March to June 2022 in the Nakivale Refugee Settlement in Uganda. Results from this pilot showed an average increase in SEL scores of 6.37% after removing a particularly high outlier from the data (which resulted in an average increase of 30%). The competencies that demonstrated the highest change were "I have goals and plan to reach them" and "I think about the future and believe it is wonderful."[48] Lastly, in partnership with Harvard's EASEL Lab, Amal Alliance piloted the program in Greece over a 16-week period from February to June 2022. Results showed that the increase in students' social and emotional competencies from 0.55 to 1.004 was statistically significant and that the effect size was very large (0.80).[49]

⚙ IMPLEMENTATION

The intervention begins with teacher training on how to promote student well-being and SEL across seven resilience-building skill areas: self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship building, social awareness, creativity, and environmental stewardship. During this initial training, teachers also become familiar with the platform that will be used to conduct the program—for schools with internet connectivity, the platform is usually the Colors of Kindness website (https://colorsofkindness.org/programs/), while for other schools, the preferred platform might be an app such as Kolibri, an open-source educational app developed by Learning Equality. Regardless of the platform, the Colors of Kindness curriculum includes an interactive digital workbook and pre-recorded podcasts to guide each lesson. Then, over a 10- to 18-week period, teachers conduct one- to two-hour weekly lessons for students. Figure 4 shows the seven core SEL skills and their sub-skills that are taught over this period.

FIGURE 3. SCREENSHOTS OF THE KOLIBRI PLATFORM

FIGURE 4. SKILLS MAP FOR COLORS OF KINDNESS
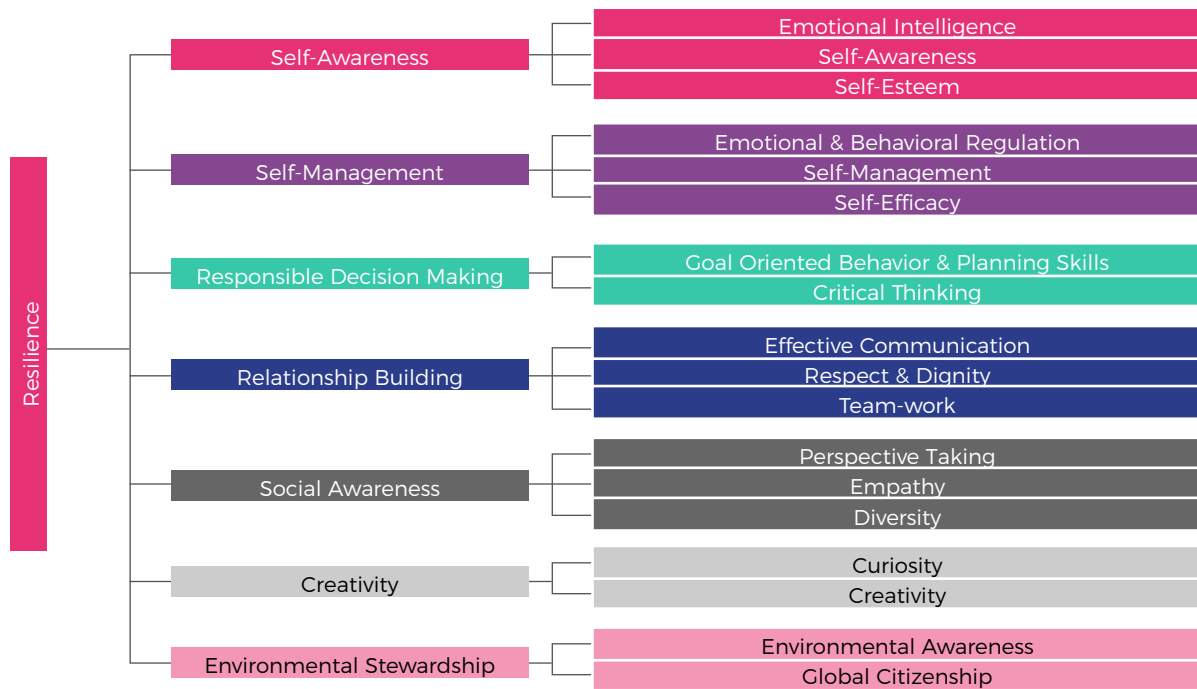
⫚ GUIDE TO CONDUCTING ACTIVITY

Colors of Kindness consists of play-based activities led by a teacher with the assistance of audio instruction and a digital workbook. The program can be carried out over a 10-week, 12-week, or 16-week period. During this time, students go on a journey through five to seven different "color clouds" to help them express themselves: the red cloud focuses on helping children identify their feelings; the orange cloud teaches them how to respond to and manage their emotions; the yellow cloud focuses on setting goals and making good decisions; the green cloud explores how to communicate effectively; the blue cloud centers on empathy, compassion, appreciating diversity; the purple cloud focuses on creativity and curiosity; and the pink cloud addresses environmental stewardship and global citizenship.

Certain activities—such as Sunny Day (a gratitude exercise) and the Emotions Thermometer (where children check their emotional temperature through drawing and an emoji-based thermometer)—are weekly staples, while other activities are unique to each cloud.

Below are some of the activities from a lesson related to the red cloud on self-awareness.

Opening Discussion

The *teacher begins the lesson by asking students the following questions:*
- *Who likes the color red?*
- *Can you spot things around the room that are red?*
- *What other things are red?*
- *How d*oes the color red make you feel?

Thunderstorm Game

In this game, the teacher shows the class how emotions can be described through facial expressions and then through sound. Students are instructed to stand in a line facing the teacher. As the teacher passes in front of each student, the student must copy the movement the teacher is doing. For example, if the teacher is clapping as they stand in front of a particular student, that student should start clapping. The teacher continues doing different movements for students until the sound of a thunderstorm grows and diminishes.

Affirmation Activity

This activity is aimed at helping students use affirmations to cultivate self-care and nourish their minds. Each week, the teacher introduces a new affirmation that students can use throughout their day to increase awareness and intention. For example, one affirmation is "I see beauty in everything." The teacher asks the students to say this affirmation aloud three times, and then explains the meaning behind it: Even if you are having a bad day, you can still learn from your experiences and look at the bright side by reminding yourself that "I see beauty in everything"—including yourself. At various points throughout the lesson, the teacher has students repeat this affirmation.

Emotions Thermometer

Each week, the teacher takes the emotional "temperature" of each student. Students are provided a blank thermometer on paper or via the app and asked, "How do you feel today?" The students choose the block of color that corresponds to their feelings. The teacher records students' responses in the app after each class or collects the colored thermometers if they are in print.

Breathwork Activity

In this activity, the teacher walks students through breathing techniques that can help them manage their emotions, especially when they are upset or angry.

Emotions Charades

The teacher creates small slips of paper with an emotion either written or drawn on it. Each child receives a slip and must act out the emotion for their peers to guess.

Sunny Day

The Sunny Day activity, which is a staple activity in every lesson in the cloud journey, teaches students to stay positive in difficult situations and to feel hopeful about the future. Teachers and students take a few minutes during each lesson to reflect on what they are grateful for. Then they have the opportunity to place a drawing or a note in the gratitude jar and share their reflection with their peers.

Weekly Challenge

At the end of each lesson, a "Challenge of the Week" encourages students to continue engaging with the material outside of the classroom. The challenge also builds excitement and momentum toward the next lesson.

CLASSROOM IN PEACE (AULAS EN PAZ)

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Classrooms in Peace (Aulas en Paz) was developed in 2005 as a research program at the Universidad de los Andes in Colombia. It was later implemented by Convivencia Productiva and, in 2022, became a nongovernmental organization in its own right. The aim of the program is to prevent aggression and violence and to promote peaceful relationships by helping students strengthen key competencies, including anger management, empathy, assertiveness, and active listening. It also emphasizes the role of bystanders by promoting assertive interventions to defend victims in bullying situations and by emphasizing peer mediation during conflicts. Aulas en Paz has three main components: (1) a classroom curriculum; (2) parent workshops and home visits to parents of aggressive children; and (3) extracurricular peer groups of two aggressive and four prosocial children.

EVIDENCE

Evidence of the effectiveness of Aulas en Paz comes from a two-year quasi-experimental evaluation conducted in 55 classrooms in seven schools in two Colombian cities with high levels of community violence.[50] Evidence of the effectiveness of Aulas en Paz comes from a two-year quasi-experimental evaluation conducted in 55 classrooms in seven schools in two Colombian cities with high levels of community violence. The evaluation had limited validity because teachers (rather than the researchers) selected classrooms to be included in the program within each school and may have chosen the classrooms based on certain characteristics (rather than randomly). Indeed, baseline measures of aggression were higher in treatment classrooms, while measures of prosocial behavior and assertiveness were higher in control classrooms. Findings show that aggressive behavior and verbal victimization decreased and prosocial behavior increased more in treatment classrooms than in control classrooms. However, it is possible that these results are due to baseline differences in the measures rather than because of the intervention. The was no significant impact on empathy or assertiveness.

IMPLEMENTATION

The class curriculum consisted of approximately 40 sessions conducted during ethics and language classes. The parenting component involved four workshops offered to all parents of treatment group classes. In addition, four home visits per year were offered to the parents of children who had been identified by teachers as being in the top 10% most aggressive children in their classes. The third component of the program involved groups of six children, two of whom were selected from the aforementioned group of children identified for home visits. These groups were engaged in 16 sessions of extracurricular activities.

Guide to Conducting Activities

Aulas en Paz teaching activities are designed to address several competencies, as follows:

- Anger management is developed through activities to help children recognize anger— including identifying physical symptoms of their own anger and judging the level of anger of a character in a story—to lessen the intensity of anger and practice how to handle it.

- Activities to promote empathy aim to develop an understanding of emotions in oneself and others and help students practice empathy toward characters in children's literature, toward real individuals, and toward animals.

- Perspective-taking is encouraged among students through techniques such as examining images whose interpretation depends on the visual perspective taken, discussing hypothetical situations facing fictional characters, and engaging in role-playing exercises in which students swap roles.

- Students are taken through a series of activities to help them consider alternatives and their consequences. For example, students brainstorm alternatives solutions to a particular problem, such as interpersonal conflict, and analyze the likely consequences of each alternative.

- Teaching strategies help students develop individual and group assertiveness. One strategy for developing

individual assertiveness involves making "I statements," such as "I feel ... when ... because ..." Group assertiveness helps students find ways to act together to stop aggressive behavior.

- Teachers promote active listening among students by modeling this behavior themselves and by encouraging active listening in a variety of situations, such as role-playing, when listening to students' personal histories, and in debates and interviews. Classes also use the technique of awarding points to students if they can accurately paraphrase the contribution of another student.

- Students are taught to question their beliefs through activities such as presenting arguments against common problematic beliefs, analyzing the consequences of problematic beliefs and generating alternatives to them, and holding debates about certain beliefs.[51]

Category 3: School Climate

This section describes effective approaches for establishing a learning environment that is responsive to children's social and emotional needs, supports social and emotional learning during all aspects of school life, and provides opportunities for children to practice emerging social-emotional competencies through positive interactions with peers and teachers. School climate supports social emotional learning: when life at school is characteristically friendly, supportive, and inclusive and provides models of empathy, pro-social behavior, and peaceful resolution of conflict, students learn these same skills.[53]

> **School and classroom climate** refers to the way that students "feel" in the school and classroom, based on their experiences with and perceptions of the different attributes of the learning environment, such as the quality of social and instructional interactions and relationships; safety; inclusion; and infrastructure. Thus, climate is a perceptual measure of the overall "feel" of school life.[46]

> **School culture** has to do with the underpinning values and norms of the school, spoken or unspoken, which drive the ways that teachers, students, parents, and school administrators approach their responsibilities and the ways that they interact with each other.[48]

In turn, as individuals' sense of safety and social and emotional skills strengthen, this helps foster a climate and culture that is more conducive to systemic SEL. Although there are definitions of a "positive school climate," such as that given by the National School Climate Center in the United States,[55] a positive school climate is best understood locally. By definition, school and classroom climates are based on the "feel" of day-to-day school life as perceived by individuals in the school—and therefore are expected to (and do) vary across individuals and are conditioned by context. Understanding existing values, opportunities, and human capacities in the school and community that support SEL is a first step toward identifying the priority areas in which school climate improvements can be made to maximize SEL (please also refer to the last section of this guidebook on culture and contextualization).[56]

This section describes two programs that were designed to improve relational dynamics, student safety and well-being, and an inclusive and predictable learning environment in government schools and schools in emergency and conflict settings. The first program presented is the School Staff and Community Members component of the Journeys Program (the Pupils component of Journeys is presented above under Category 2). In the second program we present aspects of the Foundational Training module of the International Rescue Committee's Safe Healing and Learning Spaces (SHLS) toolkit, which provides SHLS leaders and facilitators with basic principles, knowledge, and a practice base for establishing "safe, caring, and predictable" learning environments, which includes the climate of the school in and outside the classroom. The approaches and activities described herein focus on the school-climate aspects of two larger initiatives (the Journeys program under Uganda's LARA project and the entire SHLS Toolkit, respectively), which also included modules for strengthening students' SEL and improving primary-level reading and, for the SHLS Toolkit, improving primary-level mathematics instruction.

The school-climate aspects of these programs have common areas of emphasis, yet each covers unique content. Both the SHLS Toolkit and the Journeys program recognize and address the need to ensure a safe learning environment by building awareness about the many forms of violence against children in school, the impact that violence has on

children's lives, violence prevention, and child protection. The Journeys program addresses this through a variety of awareness-building activities conducted with groups of school staff and community dialogues. The Journeys program, unlike the SHLS Toolkit, directly address the different aspects of a positive school climate, including the potential role of gender-discriminating norms and power relations, which can diminish students' sense of value and impede learning. The SHLS Toolkit Foundational Training, unlike the Journeys program, provides SHLS leaders and facilitators with an in-depth knowledge of the impact of adverse experience, including violence, on brain development and learning. Furthermore, the SHLS Toolkit Foundational Training addresses student well-being more comprehensively than the Journeys program and emphasizes well-being as a key component of climate. The SHLS Toolkit Foundational Training provides critical information about the dimensions of well-being, followed by peer discussions about how to support the teachers they will work with in applying this information. Both programs provide training on children's rights based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, provide information on identifying and referring children at risk, provide guidance on positive discipline, and underscore the role of and provide guidance on how teachers can build positive teacher-student relationships.

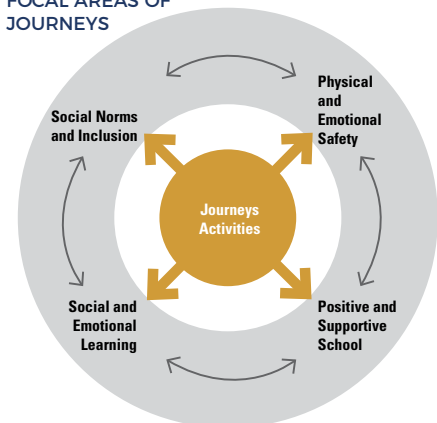## JOURNEYS FOR SCHOOL STAFF AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The Journeys program placed school climate in a central position for promoting improved reading and SEL competencies and eliminating violence in schools. It was based on the premise that school change is effective when applying a whole-school approach that involves teachers and other school staff, community members, and students. In this subsection, we present information on the Journeys activities designed for school staff and community members. The student portion of the program was presented above in Category 2.

The Journeys approach overall was centered on building awareness and fostering behavioral change around four focal areas (see **Figure 2**) through an iterative cyclical process of reflection, discussion, and practice that took place over approximately 35 weeks during the school year. These focal areas were (1) positive and supportive schools; (2) physical and emotional safety; (3) social norms and inclusion; and (4) SEL. The program for staff and community members focused on the first three of these focal areas, while the student program focused on SEL. The awareness-building activities, which were conducted separately for teachers and community members, consisted of guided meditations and dialogue, interactive games, storytelling, visual arts, and drama.

FIGURE 5: THE FOUR FOCAL AREAS OF JOURNEYS

EVIDENCE

Evidence is based on a randomized controlled trial with repeated measures, which tracked student behavioral change from grade 2 to grade 3, comparing students in schools participating in both the Journeys and early grade reading interventions and in control schools. Findings showed that students' experience of corporal punishment and bullying decreased more for students in treatment (Journeys) schools than in control schools. A higher proportion of students from schools participating in both the Journeys and early grade reading interventions were promoted (i.e., did not repeat grades) than students in schools that had only the reading intervention (i.e., not Journeys) or students in control schools. Finally, school climate was shown to mediate stronger shifts in students' SEL, corporal punishment, and bullying from grade 2 to grade 3. School climates that were perceived by students to be more positive resulted in greater increases in SEL scores after one year and greater decreases in corporal punishment and bullying experience. Teacher and student comments from focus group discussions reported improved social and emotional skills among teachers and students. Students and teachers themselves indicated that teachers were more approachable, understanding, and less likely to use corporal punishment after one year of participation in the Journeys program. Students, according to student and teacher comments, were kinder to each other (even among students across grades and sex), more willing to talk about personal matters with teachers, and more participatory in class.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Journeys activities for teaching and non-teaching staff and for community members were implemented during weekly or twice-monthly all-staff meetings and community dialogues, respectively. A total of 35 staff activities and 31 community activities were hosted by teacher or community facilitators who received a week-long training in the Journeys principles of facilitation. All staff were expected to participate in the weekly or twice-monthly school-based Journeys meetings, which were placed on the school timetable. Approximately 20–30 community members participated in Journeys activities and dialogues.

Effective facilitation was integral to the approach. During the week-long facilitator training, staff and community members learned the Journeys principles of facilitation, as follows:

Listen to the voices of participants and avoid talking too much or lecturing.	Understand the attitudes, behaviors, and perspectives of others, without judging.	Allow staff, students, and community members to take meaning from the activities and discussions themselves rather than telling them what they should know, think, and do.	Encourage shared responsibility in establishing a safe and positive school rather than transferring the responsibility to others or blaming.

GUIDE TO CONDUCTING ACTIVITY

The following presents a selection of Journeys activities for the three focal areas covered in the staff and community components: positive and supportive schools; physical and emotional safety; and social norms and inclusion. The complete set of staff and community activities can be accessed in their respective handbooks.[57]

Activities for Focal Area 1: Positive and Supportive Schools

Guided Reflection

Participants are asked to close their eyes and think back upon their life at school as a young child about seven or eight years of age. During a guided meditation, participants are nudged to think about how it was when they walked to school, when they were in their classroom, and what it was like on the school grounds. They are encouraged to reflect on specific experiences and to recall their feelings during that time. Following the guided reflection, participants are given five minutes to write about their memories. Participants then have an opportunity to share their memories with the group. Participants are invited to add positive and negative experiences on a chart in the front of the room and discuss how the negative experiences could have been handled differently. They also discuss the similarities between their past experiences in school and those of students today.

In a different visioning activity, participants imagine what their "dream school" would be like, envisioning this school to be hidden behind a closed door. A guided meditation prompts them to imagine different aspects of their dream school environment, including students' travels to school, the classroom environment, and positive student experiences on the school grounds. At the end, during the meditation, participants are guided to open the imaginary door and step into their dream schools. They are encouraged to sense what this dream school feels and looks like and are given five minutes to write down how this dream school could make a difference in the lives of children.

Brainstorming

In this brainstorming activity, participants' attention is focused on the various dimensions of a positive school climate, including healthy relationships, supportive teachers, respect for individuals with diverse backgrounds, stimulating instruction, a physically and psychologically safe learning environment, teacher and student well-being, and a pleasant physical environment. Individual participants are asked to score their schools on each dimension. Participants then discuss how to improve school climate dimensions where the schools are performing poorly.

Interactive Games

The Listening Game gives teachers a chance to experience the impact of talking to someone who is listening deeply or not listening at all. In this activity, participants are divided up into two groups—speakers and listeners. The speakers are instructed to think of a personal story to tell the listeners. Half of the listener participants are instructed on how to be "good listeners" and half the listener participants are instructed on how to be "bad listeners." Participants mingle in an open space and speakers try to tell their story to different listeners, spending about three minutes with each one. After about 15-20 minutes the groups are switched (i.e., speakers take the listener role and listeners take a speaker role). The activity is repeated for the switched roles. Following the game, participants discuss how they felt during the activity when they were listened to and when they were not listened to, and the challenges they face being a good listener, especially with their students.

Activities for Focal Area 2: Physical and Emotional Safety

Brainstorming

In this activity, participants read a short scenario about a bullying experience, discuss talking points about the scenario, and then work in small groups to brainstorm different examples of bullying. Participants write down examples of bullying on sticky notes and post them on the wall for review and discussion. Facilitators can offer additional examples not mentioned by participants. This same activity can be repeated for corporal punishment and sexual violence.

Drama and Visual Arts

Positive bystander response. *In this activity, participants work in small groups to review a scenario of violence experienced by children whereby individuals witness the incident and respond negatively (e.g., make jokes or egg the perpetrator on). Each group reviews a different scenario. Following the review, the groups prepare two dramas: one demonstrating how onlookers negatively respond to the incident in the scenario and another showing a positive response to the incident (e.g., telling the perpetrator to stop or seeking assistance from an adult).*

Images of violence. *In this activity, participants draw images of violence against children in schools on a group poster. The group posters are posted on the wall, which is followed by a gallery walk. Participants on the gallery walk take notes but are not allowed to talk to one another. Following the gallery walk, participants sit for five minutes in silence or journal before a plenary discussion.*

Small-Group Discussions

This activity gives participants an opportunity to review scenarios of different school experiences, including examples of imbalanced power relations and discrimination that impede students' experience of school, scenarios about children at risk of school failure or victimization, and examples of violence in school or when children are walking to and from school. The discussions take place in a variety of contexts such

as "Open Space" or "World Café" whereby participants discuss same or different scenarios with different groups of people. The discussions are guided by talking points. An example of a "child at risk" scenario is shown in the text box, with the group talking points following the text.

Positive Discipline Methods and Practice

Participants learn the difference between positive discipline and punishment and work in small groups to discuss how to manage different classroom scenarios through positive discipline and collaborative problem solving versus using punishment.

Activities for Focal Area 3: Social Norms and Inclusion

Activities in this focal area nudge staff, students, and community members to think about the different expectations, opportunities, and treatment of boys and girls and men and women in school, the home, and the community. The activities in this area involve interactive games that provide opportunities for people to express their opinions about discriminatory gender norms and to discuss the impact of these norms on education. Role-playing allows participants to develop insights into the impact of imbalanced power relations by age, sex, wealth, political power, and physical strength.

Interactive Games

Vote with your feet. *In this activity, participants are asked to indicate whether they agree or disagree with various statements, such as "Boys are better at mathematics than girls" or "Boys should not cry." They walk to posted responses on the wall—AGREE or DISAGREE—to respond. Then members in each group defend their response and can try convincing the others to change their mind and join their group.*

Status game. *In this game, individuals are assigned roles such as "male teacher," "female teacher," "grade 1 female student," "grade 6 male student," "farmer," "mother," "district director," "rich man," etc. In their assigned roles, the participants move around in the room and interact with each other in the manner that their assigned role would interact with the various other roles. Given about two minutes for each interaction, participants experience the feelings experienced by people who experience different power relations. This is a powerful activity that demonstrates the influence of imbalanced roles in school and society.*

HEALING CLASSROOMS FOUNDATIONAL TRAINING

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The design of the IRC Safe, Healing, and Learning Spaces (SHLS) Toolkit incorporated a Foundational Training component that is a cross-cutting training applicable across the different SHLS modules: SEL, math, reading, and parenting skills. The Foundational Training was designed to guide SHLS trainers on how to train the SHLS leaders and facilitators, who deliver the SEL, reading, math, and parental skill modules to teachers. Foundational Training manuals are available for trainers[58] and trainees (SHLS leaders and facilitators)[59] The Foundational Training equips SHLS leaders and facilitators with the foundational principles and skills needed to create a safe, caring, and predictable learning environment, such that they can work effectively with teachers in ensuring that the whole school environment, not only the classroom, is safe, caring, and predictable. Thus, the activities in the Foundational Training are aligned with the fundamental goal of establishing a learning climate that focuses on safety and well-being in addition to the specific instructional practices that build a positive classroom environment.

EVIDENCE

Evidence of impact from applications of the SHLS Toolkit is based on evaluations of the IRC Healing Classroom program implemented in the DRC and Niger. In summary, the DRC the program had marginally significant positive effects on reading scores and geometry scores but not on arithmetic scores, with the greatest improvements observed for language-minority students and in lower-performing schools. The intervention also had a positive

effect on students' perceptions of supportive and caring schools and classrooms while having a negative impact on students' sense of predictability and cooperation and no effect on students' subjective well-being. In Niger, the Healing Classrooms program included two additional interventions—Brain Games and Mindfulness (see descriptions in Category 2). The combination of interventions led to improved literacy and numeracy scores and academic grades.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Foundational Training Program was designed as a two-day complementary training to Save the Children's Psychological First Aid Training for Child Practitioners,[60] which is implemented by Healing Classroom managers to train SHLS leaders and facilitators before starting the SEL, math and reading instruction modules. The Foundational Training design involves a training venue that provides ample space for trainees to sit comfortably and participate in whole-group and small-group activities. Participatory, active learning approaches are used to engage trainees in the learning materials in such a way as to give voice to trainees' opinions and experiences and to allow peers to reflect on the information together and think about ways to apply the concepts.

GUIDE TO CONDUCTING ACTIVITY

The Foundational Training for SHLS leaders and facilitators and associated informational handouts in the Trainee's Manual focuses on the following areas:

- Well-being
- Impact of violence and toxic stress on brain development
- Child rights, violence, and child protection
- Classroom management and positive discipline
- Read-aloud and questioning strategies
- Effective and cooperative group work
- Differential learning

There is some overlap of the Foundational Training activities with those summarized in IRC's Healing Classroom Intervention with Teachers in Category 1. For example, the focal points given in the last four bullets above are the same focal points covered in IRC's Healing Classroom Intervention with Teachers; this section does not cover those, but focuses on the first three, which do not appear in Category 1.

Promoting Children's Resilience and Well-being

In this activity, teachers learn about five components of well-being: social, material, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual. The material is provided to teachers in the form of a handout which can be seen in the Safe Healing and Learning Classrooms Teacher Foundational Trainees Handbook. As with all of the knowledge and skills developed through the SHLS Foundational Training, the materials is presented during Teacher Circles, where teachers have a chance to reflect and discuss the materials and develop their own ideas about how to apply the information in their schools and classrooms. See Figure 3, extracted from the SHLS Foundational Training Trainee's Handbook.

FIGURE 6. FIVE AREAS OF WELL-BEING
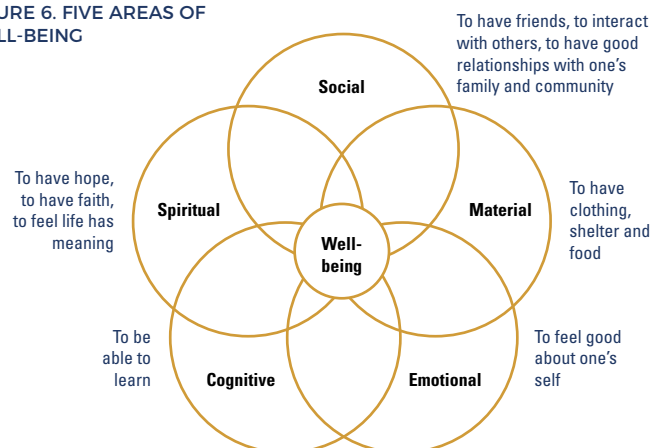
Source: International Rescue Committee, Safe Healing and Learning Spaces Toolkit's Foundational Trainee's Handbook

To build student's social well-being, teachers learn and discuss how to help students develop positive relationships at school, in the home, and in the community. Teachers learn about the meaning of emotional

well-being and during the Teacher Circles discuss how to build students' positive sense of self. They learn about the meaning of cognitive well-being and how to help children focus and stay engaged, and they learn about the importance of spiritual well-being, which children need to feel life has meaning and there is hope. Finally, teachers learn the importance of children's basic material needs, such as clothing, shelter, and food. The SHLS leader and facilitator learning objectives are to:

· *Articulate a shared understanding of what it means for a child to be "well"*

· *Articulate the concept of severe adversity and its impact on children*

· *Explain the role of SHLS facilitators in promoting children's resilience and well-being*

Keeping Children Safe and Protected

During the Foundational Training, SHLS leaders and facilitators learn about violence perpetrated against children and the impact of such violence—including physical and emotional violence and neglect—on children's mental health, brain development, and psychological and cognitive growth. This includes, for example, higher risk of psychiatric disorders, substance abuse, and cognitive processing challenges. Trainees are provided with opportunities to learn about, discuss, and think together about the lessons learned from different global programs that have proven effective in violence prevention. The SHLS leader and facilitator learning objectives are to:

· *Explain the categories of children's rights and how the SHLS helps to protect those rights*

· *Articulate the definitions of a child and child protection*

· *Sign the SHLS Code of Conduct and explain appropriate standards and behaviors of SHLS staff*

· *Articulate the meaning of feedback and two types of feedback collected in the SHLS*

· *Explain how to use the feedback mechanisms that have been developed for the SHLS*

Identifying and Referring Child Protection Cases

In addition to providing staff with information about the impact of violence and stress on brain development, the Foundational Training also gives specific guidelines on child rights given by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, on classroom management and positive discipline, and step-by-step guidance on identifying and referring children who need support services such as psycho-social support. The program emphasizes five principles of classroom management: maximizing student engagement, providing positive discipline by ensuring clear expectations and consequences, setting up and sticking to structural routines in the classroom, ensuring students feel psychologically and academically safe to speak up in class or share personal challenges, and providing positive reinforcement by recognizing accomplishments, creativity, and courage. The SHLS leader and facilitator learning objectives are to:

· *List the five categories of abuse and identify physical and behavioral signs of abuse*

· *Articulate their role in the SHLS referral pathway and the process for referring identified or suspected child protection concerns*

· *Explain the difference between informed consent and informed assent*

· *Identify child protection concerns in their context and articulate appropriate responses*

Culture and Contextualization

Contextualization of SEL Programs

SEL programs need to be adapted to context in order to be successful. Central to the contextualization process is an understanding of the social-emotional competencies that are valued and relevant in a given context and of how they develop. However, little research has focused on SEL outside of Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic (WEIRD) contexts.[61] There is a general concern that our current understanding of human psychology is not representative of the species as a whole,[62] a concern that applies equally to the domain of social and emotional development.[63] Given our limited understanding of the contextual nature of SEL, it is important to avoid unwarranted assumptions about the generalizability of SEL programs. More needs to be understood about SEL in understudied contexts and how programs can be adapted to context.

SEL programs can be contextualized at several different levels. At the highest level, the goals of a program can be adapted to context. Broadly, this involves identifying target social-emotional competencies to be developed through the program. Next, the content of a program—the materials, language, and examples that are used in an intervention—can be contextualized. Finally, implementation and delivery mechanisms can be contextualized to optimize program effectiveness in a given context. This section discusses contextualization at all three levels but focuses largely on the highest level—the contextualization of program goals—because it is the most challenging and most often overlooked.

Contextual Variation in SEL Competences

SEL competences are forged in the "developmental niche"[64] of a society. The developmental niche constitutes the values of a society, which, in turn, reflect the behaviors that are adaptive for success in that society. Insofar as societies operate differently, valued traits and behaviors also differ. In the published literature, this relationship is most evident in the contrast between small-scale agricultural communities and WEIRD societies.[65]

In WEIRD societies, families tend to invest more in the development of the cognitive skills of their children. This is possible because there are more available resources and fewer children per family. It is necessary because children are being prepared to take part in a knowledge economy. The nature of commerce and urban life in WEIRD societies means that encounters with strangers are a common form of interaction. Because of this combination of factors, WEIRD societies place value on a particular set of social-emotional competencies that include independence, self-expression, curiosity, and extroversion. Individuals in WEIRD societies try to stand out and be unique and are more likely to compete with others and have more self-esteem.[66]

By contrast, in small-scale agricultural communities, economic productivity requires groups of people—typically families—to work together toward a common goal. Families are large, with several generations often living together in one household. Daily interactions are more likely to be with members of the community with whom one has a long-term relationship rather than with strangers. Society is organized hierarchically, and respect for elders is paramount. This constellation of factors means that small-scale agricultural societies place special importance on the values of respect, obedience, social responsibility, and fitting in. Members of these societies are more likely to be shy and to cooperate and empathize with others. Children are more able to control emotions[67] and delay gratification[68] compared to their counterparts in WEIRD contexts.

Describing the world as containing only two cultural models—one associated with small-scale agricultural communities and another with WEIRD societies—seems like an oversimplification. However, a review of anthropological evidence from more than 90 countries finds many commonalities in the childhoods of small-scale agriculture communities

across the world. Similarly, childhoods in WEIRD societies also have a lot in common.[69] Nevertheless, the classification is, at best, only a high-level grouping of world cultures. Hybrid versions of these two models provide additional complexity. In many LMICs, more WEIRD values may be present in urban centers or those with high levels of formal education.[70] There are also likely to be regional variations on the overall model. For example, research based on the World Values Survey divides the world into eight groups of countries with similar values: Baltic, Orthodox, Protestant Europe, Catholic Europe, English-speaking, Confucian, African-Islamic, and Latin America.[71] Many other factors, such as religion[72] and global media, are also likely to influence values and behavior. And with regard to parenting beliefs in particular, scholars have proposed clustering these beliefs according to five global regions.[73]

Taking a Cultural Perspective

Theories and evidence on cultural differences in social and emotional competencies not only provide a strong motivation for contextualizing SEL programs but also offer a framework for understanding the values and competencies of participant communities. Cultural contexts have profound implications for how individuals construe the "self"[74] —namely, as either independent or interdependent. Indeed, scholars have described contrasting models for individuals' development of self, depending on the cultural context in which they live—one that emphasizes an individual's autonomous psychological traits (e.g., personality and preferences) and another that emphasizes the relatedness among individuals and the importance of group cohesion and communal goals.[75] Understanding these contrasting world views is important for several reasons.

First, understanding such cultural frameworks allows for a more precise understanding of the competencies valued by participant communities. For example, one study found that "confidence" was valued by communities in Tanzania. The concept that most readily maps onto confidence in existing frameworks (e.g., the CASEL framework) is self-esteem. It is tempting to make this interpretation because established scales have been developed to measure self-esteem.[76] However, because different world views embrace contrasting views of the self, it is problematic to reinterpret "confidence" in this way. For cultures with an interdependent view of self, confidence may be related more to appropriate social roles than to an evaluation of self-worth. Similarly, the same study found that respondents in Tanzania valued discipline in children. Here, it might be tempting to interpret "discipline" as "self-discipline" and relate it to the concept of "self-regulation" because this latter term is well characterized in existing frameworks. However, a careful analysis of respondent interviews makes it clear that the term "discipline" is used to mean "obedience to others" rather than "self-discipline." In order to avoid such errors of interpretation, it is important to consider different world views and the competencies valued within each world view.

Second, values do not exist in isolation. They are best understood as being part of an interrelated system that includes the environment, family structure, and economic activities, among other things. Understanding values as playing a functional role within this larger system helps in their interpretation. For example, respondents in Tanzania (and many other African contexts) value obedience in children. From the perspective of other world views, obedience may be seen as an unwelcome restriction on a child's autonomy. However, in many African societies, children are motivated to be compliant because of the sense of belonging it confers. The values of obedience, discipline, and social responsibility cannot be seen in isolation from the values of togetherness and belonging.

Third, understanding the determinants of values in a particular context helps adapt SEL programs to specific subpopulations. A country may have values that are reinforced nationally. But values may also differ within a country—for example, between urban and rural populations, or by religion, ethnicity, or other factors.

Adapting the Goals of SEL Programs to Context

As just described, the social-emotional competencies that are valued—and that help an individual be successful in society—differ from context to context. How can SEL programs take this contextual variation into account? This subsection outlines some steps for contextualizing a program's goals and ensuring that the social-emotional competencies being promoted are relevant to participating groups. The first step is to understand the current context to which the program is being adapted. The word "current" is used here to contrast with the second step, understanding *future* contexts, or the direction in which a society is heading or is aspiring to head. Finally, the third

step involves integrating multiple perspectives on an SEL program—current realities, aspirations for the future, and the different views of stakeholders. Following these steps can make programs more relevant, more effective, and more widely accepted among participants.

UNDERSTANDING CURRENT CONTEXT

The first task in adapting an SEL program to context is to understand and describe that context. Although there is a strong need for more developmental science research in LMICs to describe contexts in detail, such an endeavor is beyond the scope of most program contextualization efforts. Instead, this guidebook proposes a few key steps that can help program developers understand context with relative efficiency: considering the sociodemographic profile of the participant group, reviewing existing data, and conducting rapid primary data collection.

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

As noted above, there is evidence of two systems of values and behaviors that are found repeatedly around the world—those associated with WEIRD societies and those associated with small-scale agricultural societies. Specifically, research suggests that a society's values shift from small-scale agricultural to WEIRD with increasing levels of formal education, widespread use of technology, increased prevalence of commercial activities, and urbanization.[77] Statistics are available on some of these variables for most countries—and for some regions within countries —which can be used to predict likely value systems for a participant community. For example, numerous studies[78] have demonstrated that rural populations in sub-Saharan Africa value respect, obedience, and a sense of belonging—values associated with an interdependent view of the self. Therefore, for any SEL program operating in a new context in rural sub-Saharan Africa, it is reasonable to explore the possibility that a similar cultural model is in operation.

DIRECT DATA ON VALUES AND CULTURE

In addition to sociodemographic data, more direct sources may be available that help describe the values and culture of participant societies. These sources may include research studies in anthropology or in developmental and cultural psychology. Further, multicountry cross-cultural studies[79] and cross-national surveys such as the UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (https://mics.unicef.org/) and World Values Survey (https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp) may be particularly valuable for illustrating commonalities and contrasts across contexts.

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEWS

The above steps can help identify candidate SEL competencies to be targeted by a program intervention. However, there is no substitute for primary data collected from participants. The following steps are recommended for gathering such data with relative efficiency.

The first step in data collection is to prompt respondents to generate a set of social and emotional competencies that are valued in society.[80] It is important that these data be collected before interviewers themselves mention any competencies that may influence respondents. Suggested questions are "What are the qualities that you would like your children/students to develop in life?" and "What are the qualities that help a child succeed at school?" Because respondents sometimes mention academic qualities—such as the ability to read and write—in response to the second question, probing questions can be added, such as "Among these qualities, which ones do children have on the day they start school?" or "What qualities do children learn at home that help them in school?"

An efficient method for generating competencies is the free-listing exercise.[81] In this exercise, individual respondents are asked to list as many qualities as possible in response to the prompt questions, providing only a brief description of each quality before moving to the next. To the extent that such interviews can be conducted rapidly, a relatively large sample of respondents may be possible.

An alternative way to understand valued competencies is to discuss challenging situations with participants and the coping strategies they use to deal with them. Through this method, valued competencies can be inferred.[82] For example, a student discussing interpersonal conflict with fellow students may describe how they were able to calm the situation by seeing it from the other students' point of view. Through this process, we can infer that perspective-taking is a valued competency in that context.

In the second step, a list of candidate competencies can be generated. The list should include those identified by participants in qualitative interviews. It can also include competencies introduced by program designers who may wish to introduce technical terms that are unlikely to be mentioned spontaneously by participants (e.g., "emotional regulation") or new concepts that are being introduced as part of the program.

A final step involves interviewing participants to interpret and evaluate the candidate list of competencies. Interpretation can involve asking participants to define terms or to list several behaviors associated with each term. The goal should be to identify five to ten behaviors that are commonly associated with each term. This approach to defining terms is important because many constructs that have superficial similarity across cultures may be subtly or profoundly different. For example, in a study in Tanzania, respondents said they valued the "discipline" of children.[83] This construct refers to children's willingness to fit in and follow orders and is quite different from the "self-discipline" of meeting deadlines and managing one's workload that is mentioned in the CASEL framework. After defining each term, participants can be asked to rate and discuss the importance of the competency in their community. A final list of target SEL competencies should include those that are both well defined and seen as important by participants.

Figure 1 shows the findings from the aforementioned study in Tanzania,[84] which applied the above methodology to identifying competencies valued by teachers and caregivers for their children. The competencies most frequently mentioned are presented in categories that map onto those in the internationally used CASEL framework. However, there are key differences in the valued competencies. In particular, the most valued competencies in the Tanzania study were in the category of "social responsibility," which was very distinct from the "social awareness" and "relationship skills" categories of the CASEL framework. The "social responsibility" category includes qualities such as respect, obedience, and discipline, which are valued highly by teachers and parents alike.

CASEL framework	**SOCIAL AWARENESS** Perspective-taking Empathy Appreciating diversity Respect for others	**RELATIONSHIP SKILLS** Communication Social engagement Relationship building Teamwork	**SELF-MANAGEMENT** Impulse control Stress management Self-discipline Self-motaivation Goal setting Organizational skills	**SELF-AWARENESS** Identifying emotions Accurate self-perception Recognizing strengths Self-confidence Self-efficacy
Findings from Mtwara, Tanzania	**SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY** **Obedient** **Respect** **Attentive** **Disciplined** **Polite and calm**	**SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS** Trustworthy Truthful **Cooperative** **Sociable** Funny Loving others	**INDIVIDUAL COMPETENCIES** **Curious** **Self-directed** Careful Persistent To have goals	**Self-belief** Courageous/daring Self-awareness

FIGURE 7. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FINDINGS FROM TANZANIA AND THE CASEL FRAMEWORK OF SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCES
Note: Bold text indicates competences mentioned frequently or rated as important.

Source: M. C. H. Jukes, P. Gabrieli, N. L. Mgonda, et al., "'Respect Is an Investment': Community Perceptions of Social and Emotional Competencies in Early Childhood from Mtwara, Tanzania," Global Education Review 5, no. 2 (2018). This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

UNDERSTANDING FUTURE CONTEXTS

One of the challenges of education was accurately summarized by Julian Huxley, the first director-general of UNESCO, who said that "education should be adapted to the local environment of time and place, and yet give the opportunity of transcending that environment."[85] It is important to recognize that communities change and have aspirations. We should not let attempts at cultural responsiveness lead to cultural stasis and the blunting of ambitions for change. Indeed, many programs to promote SEL competencies are part of a movement for change, as is made explicit in the "21st century skills" agenda.[86] How, though, can we predict the values that will become important in the future?

One approach is to observe the cultural change that is already evident within society. If the trends in society are toward more formal education and greater urbanization—as they are in many countries—we may predict that the

values associated with urban, educated communities[87] will become more prevalent. Similar differences can be seen between teachers and parents in rural areas, or between the cultures of home and school. One study in Tanzania found differences between parents and teachers in the qualities seen as important for children's education.[88] Parents were most likely to value respect, obedience, discipline, and attentive listening, whereas teachers were more likely to value self-belief, confidence, and curiosity.

A second approach is to ask participants directly about the future. The interview process outlined above can be appended by asking participants to describe the competencies they anticipate being more valued in the future, or the competencies they believe that the current generation of children should develop now to become successful adults.

A third approach is to examine ways in which a society is intentionally trying to shape the future. For example, many national governments espouse the aim of developing "21st century skills"[89] among children and youth. These skills may include collaboration, communication, creativity, critical thinking, social and interpersonal skills,[90] technology and computer skills, listening skills, critical and analytical thinking, self-regulation, and academic skills. Any SEL program should be compatible with these national goals. Indeed, such programs may be an integral part of attempts to achieve them.

INTEGRATING PERSPECTIVE

A well-conducted contextualization process can expose potentially competing goals for a program—for example, between the goals of participants, governments, and program designers, or between current and future goals. An effective way to address such conflicts is through a facilitated conversation among all stakeholders. During this conversation, it is important that the rationale for the program be clearly presented to participants and that potential conflicts be explored—for example, where the program appears inconsistent with participant values. Giving participant communities a voice in reviewing program design is important for two reasons: it helps ensure that the program genuinely meets their needs and helps the program be more effective and achieve wider acceptance in the participant community.

Adapting the Design and Implementation of SEL Programs to Context

After determining the locally relevant goals of an SEL program, much work is needed to contextualize the program's design and implementation.[91] In addition to the relevance of SEL competencies (discussed above), the timing of the development of different competencies may differ across contexts. In designing intervention materials, it is important to be aware of local terminology and ways of framing SEL competencies. The process of participant interviews discussed above is particularly informative for understanding these issues.

Program implementation also needs to be adapted to context. Research in the contextualization phase can help identify strategies and routines that are familiar to teachers and students locally or can easily be incorporated into an intervention. For example, the Brain Games intervention[92] discussed earlier in this guidebook incorporates local games and chants into program activities. The design of materials and modes of delivery can also be adapted in consultation with participating communities. Prototype interventions can be tested out and revised based on initial feedback.

An instructive example of how to adapt an SEL program to context comes from work in Nigeria.[93] The contextualization process in this work consisted of landscape research with teachers, caregivers, and government officials; the creation of initial prototypes; design workshops and rapid prototyping; and field testing.

In another example, teachers in Tanzania participated in a hybrid program of professional development—an initial workshop followed by online support—to improve classroom climate and the quality of teacher-student interactions.[94] In order to adapt the program to context, teachers and teacher trainers took part in a process of instructional co-design that involved modifying instructional routines to tackle perceived barriers to implementation while being faithful to the learning goal of the activities.

Overall, a considered process of contextualization is essential to ensure relevance to the needs of participants, the effectiveness of the approaches used, and acceptance of the program by the participant community.

CONCLUDING NOTES:
Considerations for Implementation

Whether you are a high-level government official in education, an area expert, an education district or school manager, or working with an LMIC government to integrate SEL into policy and programming, if you have picked up this guidebook you are likely looking to enhance student learning outcomes through the integration of SEL into the curriculum and classroom or by adapting the learning environment to better promote SEL. Different users will be looking for guidance on the promotion of SEL for different purposes.

Thus, before selecting which elements of this guidebook to implement, it is recommended that you take stock of the current situation as it applies to your particular education setting. One aspect to explore is the cultural and policy context. Another aspect is the school or education system's current approach to supporting SEL. For example, what do teachers understand and believe about SEL, and what are they currently doing to promote SEL in their classrooms? In addition, some stocktaking about the nature of the school climate is an important preliminary step in implementing SEL. How do students feel about life at school? Are their relationships with peers and their teachers positive and supportive? Do some students feel good about their life at school while others feel unsafe and left out?

After you have taken these preliminary steps and established your goals for SEL programming, you can use the guidance presented here to inform implementation. Decision-making about introducing or enhancing practices to support SEL in any education setting is best done collectively, including with education officials and technical specialists, school managers, teachers, students, and even parents or community members.

Five illustrative scenarios about how this guidebook might be used are presented below.

Scenario 1   **There is an active life skills curriculum that includes SEL content, but the director of the Curriculum and Instruction (C&I) Department would like to see how this curriculum could be enhanced to better promote SEL.** Category 2 of this guidebook provides information about programs and a variety of child-centered activities that could help the director enhance the existing curriculum for SEL. The programs described, the resources referenced, and the examples of specific activities provided could be used to enhance the existing life skills curriculum so that it also serves to strengthen targeted and prioritized social-emotional competencies. For example, the Brain Games activity from the Healing Classrooms program could be added to the curriculum to strengthen executive functions that may not have been included in the original curriculum.

Scenario 2   **An education planner is aware of the importance of SEL programming but does not have funding for comprehensive programming or a dedicated SEL curriculum. The planner speaks to the C&I team for advice. The team suggests that the education department begin in the classroom and work with school heads to provide teachers with new strategies to foster SEL during their day-to-day instruction.** Category 1 of this guidebook provides a description of evidence-based programs that offer strategies that are aligned with the C&I team's recommendations. The examples from Healing Classrooms focus on building a classroom climate that fosters SEL through instructional methods that build self-esteem, a sense of belonging, and peer cooperation and relationships. In addition, the approaches reviewed for building teachers' growth mindset can translate into instruction that recognizes and fosters students' sense of their own potential to learn, which gives them hope and motivates purposive learning. These teacher professional development strategies paired with selected strategies from Category 3 (School Climate) can help build a learning environment that is safe and responsive to students' psycho-social needs, nurtures SEL, and provides opportunities for students to practice their emerging and strengthened social-emotional competencies. The instructional practices and principles of a safe and caring climate can be introduced gradually during regular teacher programs, such as teacher communities of practice within or across school networks as a way of steadily integrating SEL into school life at a low cost.

Scenario 3 **A surge of refugees is entering an LMIC. The education ministry has received funding to support teachers in making the needed adjustments. The ministry believes that teachers need professional development to both improve their instruction and address the social-emotional needs of the local and refugee student populations. There is not a lot of time to customize a new curriculum, and therefore the government is looking for an effective program that it can adapt quickly.** In this case, an adaption of the IRC's Safe Healing and Learning Spaces Toolkit, which focuses on education in emergency contexts and on teacher professional development, may work well for the ministry.

Scenario 4 **A school has been hit hard by gang violence. Children don't feel safe traveling to school or at school during the school day. It is hard for students to concentrate, and bullying is prominent on the school grounds. Teachers struggle to teach effectively in this troubling environment. The school district has brought head teachers together to address this situation, and it is agreed that a holistic approach must be taken to ensure that all children feel safe and to help them develop a sense of belonging at the school and purpose in learning. The group also recognizes that students need to develop coping skills and that their social-emotional learning competencies need strengthening.** In this situation, the guidebook can be used to launch a discussion about a district strategy to make the changes in the school that will effectively address these issues. The district might, for example, form an SEL planning team to study the evidence-based programs and the example approaches presented in all three Categories of the guidebook (i.e., SEL Integrated into the Classroom, Child-Centered SEL Activities, and School Climate). The team could then work with head teachers in the district to develop a complimentary mix of approaches to meet their needs while not overwhelming teachers or impeding ongoing learning programs.

Scenario 5 **In this education ministry, there is a dedicated SEL curriculum that has a place on the school timetable. The curriculum involves a mix of child-centered activities, including games and group work, each of which targets specific social-emotional competencies. An external evaluation of the curriculum has recommended that the curriculum's effectiveness be enhanced by having teachers reinforce students' developing social-emotional competencies in the classroom during all subject-matter instruction and by making better use of existing subject-matter materials (e.g., supplementary reading materials) to give students a chance to practice these skills.** Category 1 of the guidebook describes effective programs that do just this. A selection of teachers who are currently implementing the SEL curriculum could study the programs introduced in Category 1 and determine which approaches embraced by these programs would best compliment the current SEL curriculum. In doing so, the teachers could co-create a classroom strategy that works for them and that can be integrated into their daily instruction without creating extensive burdens for teachers.

As these scenarios illustrate, there is much flexibility in the approach to supporting SEL in the classroom. If your task is to design a curriculum and instructional approaches from scratch in a well funded education system, all of the approaches described in this book are available to you. If however, you are working with limited resources, or with an existing curriculum with little flexibility for change, the scenarios illustrate ways in which evidence-based practices can be adopted. In all of these scenarios, SEL programming is interwoven within a learning environment that is safe, caring, and predictable—the kind of environment that fosters a sense of belonging and purposive learning among students. The mix of approaches, activities, and climate priorities that educators adapt will depend on the unique values and priorities that school communities place on different social-emotional competencies, the current knowledge of and operationalization of SEL programs, and the specific demands for SEL programming presented by educational institutions. These are decisions that only the user communities can make.

Finally, the programs and approaches presented in the guidebook are complementary by design. We recommend that the user promotes synergies by combining practices. Our approach in this guidebook was to break programs into constituent parts to offer the user a menu of options to give flexibility in program design. However, many of the evidence-based practices were designed to be implemented together. For example, the Healing Classroom program provides approaches that help teachers develop student wellbeing holistically, through daily interactions, subject matter and specific child-centered activities. The Journeys program compliments this through a whole school

approach to building a positive and caring learning environment. Meanwhile a variety of child-centered activities are presented that support children's wellbeing through games, for example, that build children's self-esteem and social capital through positive inter-personal relationships. When these approaches are applied together, the synergies produce could be powerful in supporting wellbeing and at once strengthening student's social-emotional competencies, resilience, and agency to engage actively and succeed in their learning.

Appendix

Program (with url)	Country	Focus area*		
Ahlan Simsim (Sesame Street Middle East)	Iraq, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon		SET	
Asegurando la Educacion (School Based Violence Prevention Activity)	Honduras			SC
Brain Games			SET	
Cultivating Inclusive & Supportive Learning Environment Program (CISLE)	Jordan	SEL		SC
Early Childhood Development Mass Media Activity Bangladesh Locally contextualized SEL through Seseme Street	Bangladesh	SEL	SET	
Education Crisis Response	Nigeria	SEL		
Fostering Patience in the classroom (Alan&Ertac, 2018)	Turkey		SET	
Holistic Learning Approach			SET	
IRC EiE Nigeria Accelerated Learning Program (ALP)	Nigeria		SET	
IRC Healing Classrooms (HC)	DRC	SEL	SET	
IRC Healing Classrooms (HC)	Lebanon (Syrian refugees)	SEL	SET	
IRC Healing Classrooms (HC)	Nigeria	SEL	SET	
IRC Healing Classrooms (HC)	Lebanon, Niger, and Sierra Leone	SEL	SET	
IRC Safe Healing and Learning Spaces (SHLS)		SEL	SET	
Journeys for Pupils	Uganda, Tanzania, Colombia	SEL	SET	
Journeys for Teachers and School Staff	Uganda	SEL		
Journeys for Community Members	Uganda			SC
Mindanao Youth for Development (MYDEV) Philippines (Life Skils for Out of School Youth)	Philippines	SEL		
Mindfulness and Social–Emotional Learning Program (M-SEL)	Brazil		SET	
Mindset Interventon with Teachers (Fundação Getulio Vargas)	Brazil	SEL	SET	
Grow Your Mind (GYM) growth mindset Intervention	Peru	SEL	SET	
Pakistan Reading Project	Pakistan	SEL		
Pedagogical Innovation Project (Projeto de Inovação Pedagógica – PIP)	Brazil	SEL		
Qitabi 1 & 2	Lebanon	SEL	SET	SC
SAVE Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) interventions	Bangladesh	SEL		
Tanzania Proof of Concept: "Safe and Social Schools"	Tanzania	SEL	SET	
UNICEF Integrated Essential Emergency Education Services (IEEES)	South Sudan		SET	
We Love Reading	Jordan		SET	
WHO Life Skills Curriculum	Kenya		SET	

* FOCUS AREA LEGEND

SEL   SEL integrated into the classroom

SET   Targeted child-centered SET activities

SC   School climate

Endnotes

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