INTEGRATION OF SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING INTO BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAMMING

FINDINGS FROM EIGHT CASE STUDIES

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Submitted to:
USAID

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DISCLAIMER

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ACRONYMS

AENN	Addressing Education in Northeast Nigeria
ALE	Asegurando la Educación
ALS	Alternative Learning System
ANFEA	Adult and Non-Formal Education Agency
AOR	Agreement Officer's Representative
BEC	Basic Education Coalition
CASEL	Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning
CBOs	Community-based Organizations
CBT	Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy
CERD	Center for Educational Research and Development
DEC	Development Experience Clearinghouse
DGE/DOPS	The Lebanese Department of Orientation and Guidance within the Directorate of General Education
ECR	Education Crisis Response
ECW	Education Cannot Wait
EDC	Education Development Center
EF	Empleando Futuros
EWS	Early Warning System
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
HICs	High-income Countries
HMC	Herramienta de Medición de Cambios
HR	Human Resources
HQ	Headquarters
IE	Impact Evaluation
IP	Implementing Partner
IRC	International Rescue Committee
KII	Key Informant Interview
LARA	Literacy Achievement and Retention Activity
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex
LMICS	Low- and Middle-income Countries
MEHE	Ministry of Education and Higher Education
METAS	Mejorando la Educación para Trabajar, Aprender y Superarse
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoESTS	Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Sports

MYDev	Mindanao Youth for Development
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NFLC	Non-Formal Learning Center
NORC	National Opinion Research Center
PE	Physical Education
PRP	Pakistan Reading Project
PSS	Psychosocial Support
QITABI	Quality Instruction Towards Access and Basic Education Improvement
SBV	School-based Violence
SRGBV	School-related Gender-based Violence
SEL	Social and Emotional Learning
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TESDA	Technical Education and Skills Development Authority
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VACiS	Violence Against Children in Schools
VIP-RA	Violence-Involved Persons Risk Assessment
YDA	Youth Development Alliances
YES	Youth Employment Survey
YPS	Youth Perceptions Survey
YSET	Youth Service Eligibility Tool

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2018 USAID Education Policy identifies social and emotional skills, alongside literacy and numeracy skills, as a foundational learning outcome. USAID commissioned NORC to complete a series of qualitative case studies to understand how social and emotional learning (SEL)[1] is integrated into USAID basic education activities.[2] The research team used document analysis and key informant interviews (KIIs) to answer the following questions:

- How are social and emotional skills integrated into the conceptualization and design of USAID's basic education activities?

- How are SEL interventions managed, implemented, and measured?

- What are the best practices and lessons learned in designing, implementing, and measuring SEL in USAID's basic education activities?

- How can USAID better support Mission staff to design and manage interventions toward social and emotional skills or outcomes?

In addition to this report, individual Case Studies have been published for the following nine[3] current or completed USAID basic education activities:

- Asegurando la Educación (ALE)/Honduras

- Education Crisis Response (ECR)/Nigeria

- Empleando Futuros (EF)/Honduras

- Literacy Achievement and Retention Activity (LARA)/Uganda

- Mindanao Youth for Development (MYDev)/Philippines

- The Pakistan Reading Project (PRP)/Pakistan

- Quality Instruction Towards Access and Basic Education Improvement (QITABI)/Lebanon; QITABI 2/Lebanon

- Early Childhood Development Mass Media Activity (Sisimpur)/Bangladesh

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[1] Social and emotional learning (SEL) is "the process through which children and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitude to develop healthy identities, manage their emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions" (CASEL, 2020).
[2] USAID's basic education activities include pre-primary, primary, secondary, and youth workforce development activities.
[3] From the SEL programming standpoint, QITABI/Lebanon and QITABI 2/Lebanon are substantially distinct and are therefore treated as two separate activities.

KEY FINDINGS

SEL DESIGN PHASE

1. In designing SEL, key informants emphasized the importance of agreeing with local stakeholders on SEL terminology and related definitions.
2. The majority of activities directly referred to social and emotional skills as a means to achieve other outcomes in the theory of change, such as reading skills, employability, and reduced school-level violence. When activities based such outcomes on the school and community's specific SEL needs, key informants had a more consistent understanding of SEL's role in a theory of change.

SEL CONTEXTUALIZATION[4]

The report highlights findings from: 1) contextualization of SEL competence areas[5] and skills, and 2) contextualization of SEL teaching and learning content.

3. Much of the contextualization occurred later at the skills level after global SEL frameworks and competence areas were adopted. Exceptionally, QITABI 2/Lebanon provided a promising example of contextualizing both competence areas and skills, to develop a locally driven SEL framework.
4. Comparing a global set of skills with a country's education curricula is an effective method of contextualization at the social and emotional skills level.
5. The report highlights a rigorous pilot testing of SEL teaching and learning content with learners and educators to design effective SEL intervention.

SEL FOR EQUITY AND INCLUSION

6. SEL interventions can advance the educational goal of equity and inclusion by building learners' agency and fostering inclusive school climate.

SEL IMPLEMENTATION

7. Activities that integrate SEL using multiple approaches across various entry points are considered more effective. In addition, the research team found that:

   – Key informants perceived explicit SEL skills instruction as more effective.

   – Integration with school curriculum approaches is effective for practicing and reinforcing social and emotional skills. Key informants also considered child-friendly classroom and school culture approaches as crucial for the education system-wide support for SEL.

   – SEL policy adoption occurred more when the relevant ministry took the lead in SEL implementation.

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[4] A definition of contextualization used in this report can be found on page 15 under the "Contextualizing SEL competence areas and skills" section.
[5] "Competence area" is defined as a domain, cluster, and categories of interrelated social and emotional skills or constructs. More details can be found in the "Definition of key terms" section on page 8 of this report.

8. In strengthening sustainability of SEL interventions, it is important to ensure partnerships with stakeholders across all levels of the education system and with communities.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND CHAMPIONS

9. Obtaining support from local education authorities and school leadership, as well as providing continuous professional development opportunities can strengthen educators' championing of new SEL approaches.

SEL MEASUREMENT

10. The report highlights the need to measure social and emotional skills and associated outcomes with tools that are developed or adapted to the specific context and the activity design.
11. In addition, the report elaborates on the evidence gleaned by measuring teachers' instructional practices in documenting the impacts of SEL interventions.

KEY INFORMANTS' RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE USAID SUPPORT

12. In-country implementing partners and USAID mission staff suggest more resources to account for flexibility in designing, implementing, and measuring future SEL activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the key findings, the following four points synthesize the major recommendations:

First, it is crucial to agree on context-specific SEL terminology, related definitions, and the role of SEL in the activity's theory of change during the design phase.

Second, the contextualization process should be based on the understanding that social and emotional competence areas and skills may include those that are universal as well as those that are culturally and contextually specific. Rigorous and iterative pilot testing of SEL teaching and learning materials with learners and educators will enable proper contextualization.

Third, activity staff should ensure that SEL is integrated using multiple innovative pedagogical approaches (*e.g.* embedding learning through play concepts within SEL activities) and that the integration is a long-term educational goal that is conducted system wide.

Fourth, when possible, assess social and emotional skills and associated outcomes using measurement tools that are developed or adapted to the specific context and the activity design.

1. INTRODUCTION

The definition of quality education in the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 has expanded to foster "flexible skills and competencies that prepare learners for diverse challenges."[6] Indeed, social and emotional skills have emerged as core behavior-related skills necessary for children and youth's learning and healthy development, and subsequently, social and emotional learning (SEL) has gained substantial attention as the "missing piece" in academic success, interpersonal development, and life success (Durlak *et al.*, 2011; Elias *et al.*, 1997; Jones *et al.*, 2017a).

The 2018 U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education and the 2018 USAID Education Policy for the first time identified social and emotional skills as a learning outcome foundational to future learning and success, alongside literacy and numeracy skills. Through the Strategy and Policy, USAID is providing new opportunities to systematically design, measure, implement, and understand the impact of programs that build social and emotional skills or soft skills for learners. Published in 2019, the Social and Emotional Learning and Soft Skills Policy Brief[7] was a timely response to support USAID staff and implementing partners by defining the key terms, specifying desired outcomes and quality standards for programming, and identifying evidence and best practices. However, given the growing demand for more technical support on social and emotional skills or soft skills programming by Missions, USAID commissioned NORC to complete a series of qualitative case studies to identify best practices for SEL integration into USAID's basic education activities, which include pre-primary, primary, secondary, and youth workforce development activities.[8]

BACKGROUND ON SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

While there is no accepted single, consistent, or cross-national definition of SEL and related terms (*e.g.* life skills, 21st-century skills, and non-academic skills) USAID defines social and emotional skills as a *"set of cognitive, social, and emotional competencies that children, youth, and adults learn through explicit, active, focused, sequenced instruction that allows them to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions."*[9] Social and emotional skills is the umbrella term used across all levels and settings of USAID's basic education activities. The USAID Education Policy Brief also describes a typical use of the term "soft skills" in its youth workforce development activities, higher education activities, and in the context of cross-sectoral positive youth development programming, aligning with USAID's vision to help youth become healthy, productive, included, and engaged individuals. The term "social and emotional skills,"

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[6] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2016). Global education monitoring report summary 2016: Education for people and planet: Creating sustainable futures for all. p.9.

[7] USAID. (2019). Social and emotional learning and soft skills: USAID Education Policy Brief.

[8] USAID's definition of "basic education" includes interventions and activities designed to improve early childhood, pre-primary education, primary education, and secondary education levels both in formal and non-formal education settings, as well as learning for out-of-school youth and adults, youth workforce development, vocational training activities, and capacity-building interventions for educators and administrators of the respective interventions. See USAID 2018, p.44.

[9] The definition of SEL comes from the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), which is being used by USAID (2019). For additional background information on SEL/soft skills, please refer to the USAID 2019 Education Policy Brief.

however, is typically used in the context of formal or non-formal education programming, across all levels of the education system.[10]

Just as the variety of definitions of SEL and related terminologies exist, specific skills promoted by different SEL interventions also vary. Different frameworks exist for organizing social and emotional skills; the most widely used Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning's (CASEL) framework includes five areas of competence, with examples of skills for each competence:[11]

- Self-awareness (*e.g.*, sense of confidence and purpose, identifying one's emotions, integrating personal and social identities)

- Self-management (*e.g.*, self-discipline, impulse control, stress management, demonstrating personal and collective agency)

- Social awareness (*e.g.*, perspective-taking, empathy, identifying diverse social norms)

- Relationship skills (*e.g.*, communication skills, teamwork, conflict resolution, standing up for the rights of others)

- Responsible decision-making (*e.g.*, critical thinking, curiosity, identifying solutions for problem)

Since there are many terms to describe similar non-cognitive constructs, this report will mainly use the following terms: "competence areas"[12] and "skills," unless specifically defined in an activity. Following CASEL's use of the term, this report uses "competence area" as a domain, cluster, and categories of interrelated social and emotional skills or constructs. As such, the term represents a higher-order, aggregated concept than individual "skills."

SEL AND ASSOCIATED OUTCOMES

There is well-documented evidence of SEL's positive impact on improving academic performance, prosocial behaviors, positive relationships in and out of schools, reducing violence and conduct problems, and supporting general well-being in high-income countries (HIC), as well as emerging evidence of SEL's positive impact on learner's social-emotional development and psychosocial well-being from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) (Durlak *et al.*, 2011; Jones *et al.*, 2017a; Weissberg *et al.*, 2015; Dolan and Weiss-Yagoda, 2017; Pisani *et al.*, 2016).

Meanwhile, there has been growing constructive criticism of the cultural and local relevance of social and emotional skills in LMICs (Jukes *et al.*, 2018; Jeong, 2019; Sumida, 2019). From the sociocultural perspective, social and emotional skills emphasized in SEL frameworks developed in the United States often do not take into account social and emotional skills valued and prioritized by communities in LMICs. For example, educators and caregivers in Tanzania and Ghana emphasized social skills such as respect, obedience, and relationship skills rather than individual-level skills, but SEL implementation

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[10] See additional details on related terminology and USAID's approaches in USAID (2019).

[11] CASEL recently updated the SEL framework to promote educational equity for diverse children, adolescents, and adults (CASEL, 2020)

[12] "Competency" is defined as "more than just knowledge and skills, which involves the ability to meet complex demands, by drawing on and mobilizing skills and attitudes in particular contexts" (OECD, 2005, p.4).

generally tends to emphasize practice of individualistic skills (Jukes *et al.*, 2018; Jeong, 2019). In addition, there has been criticism that SEL programs have not acknowledged the importance of the broader social, economic, and cultural contexts (Jagers *et al.*, 2019). This social justice perspective emphasizes the importance of including racial, ethnic, class, regional, and gender differences in SEL programming to address the structural inequities.

RESEARCH PURPOSE

The purpose of this research is to share best practices and lessons learned from USAID basic education activities that foster social and emotional skills. It aims to discover and elevate good practices from the field that may not otherwise surface in traditional evidence gathering or synthesis exercises.

Social and emotional skills prominently feature in USAID's education learning agendas[13] and also the Standard and Supplemental Foreign Assistance Indicators.[14] USAID Missions continue to include social and emotional skills in strategic plans and documents through the program cycle, with training on social and emotional skills becoming an increasingly common request from Missions.

Through this study, USAID's Center for Education hopes to provide guidance on how to integrate SEL into basic education activities, both in formal and non-formal settings. Dissemination of the case study research findings will also enable USAID to provide thought leadership to donor groups such as Education Cannot Wait (ECW), Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the Basic Education Coalition (BEC), the Youth Employment Funders Group, and the LEGO Foundation.

Specifically, the study aims to address the following research questions:

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RESEARCH QUESTION 1

How are social and emotional skills integrated into the conceptualization and design of USAID's basic education activities?

Sub-question 1.1: How are SEL interventions conceptualized and designed?

Sub-question 1.2: How are SEL programs adapted to context?

Sub-question 1.3: How do SEL interventions approach equity and inclusion?

RESEARCH QUESTION 2

How are SEL interventions managed, implemented, and measured?

Sub-question 2.1: How are SEL interventions implemented and managed?

Sub-question 2.2: Who are key stakeholders, champions, and critics for SEL interventions?

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[13] USAID Learning Agendas
[14] USAID Education Reporting Toolkit

Sub-question 2.3: How do SEL activities approach measurement?

RESEARCH QUESTION 3

What are the best practices and lessons learned in designing, implementing, and measuring SEL in USAID's basic education activities?

Sub-question 3.1: What best practices are identified?

Sub-question 3.2: What lessons learned are identified?

RESEARCH QUESTION 4

How can USAID better support Mission staff to design and manage interventions toward social and emotional skills or outcomes?

Sub-question 4.1: What kinds and levels of support are provided to USAID Mission staff from USAID headquarters and other Missions?

Sub-question 4.2: What more needs to be done?

2. METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

The research team conducted this study in two major phases using document review and key informant interviews (KIIs).

CASE SELECTION

The study began by selecting nine current or completed USAID activities in which social and emotional skills were integrated into school-based and/or youth workforce development interventions (Table 1). While the Quality Instruction Towards Access and Basic Education Improvement (QITABI/Lebanon) activity and its follow-up activity, QITABI 2/Lebanon, were considered to be one case in USAID's initial selection, from the SEL programming standpoint, the two activities are substantially distinct and are therefore treated as separate activities. Table 1 below summarizes characteristics of each of the focus interventions by activity location, duration, level of education, context, setting, and implementing partners.

Table 1. Case Study Activities Summary

ACTIVITY	COUNTRY	DURATION	LEVEL OF EDUCATION	CONTEXT[15]	SETTING[16]	IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS
Asegurando la Educación (ALE)	Honduras	2017–2022	Primary and secondary (grades 4–9)	Crisis-affected	Formal	DAI
Education Crisis Response (ECR)	Nigeria	2014–2018	Primary, secondary, and youth workforce development (ages 6–17)	Conflict-affected	Non-formal	Creative Associates International
Empleando Futuros (EF)	Honduras	2016–2021	Secondary and youth workforce development (ages 16 to young adults)	Crisis-affected	Non-formal	Banyan Global
Literacy Achievement and Retention Activity (LARA)	Uganda	2015–2021	Primary (grades 3–7)	Stable, low-income	Formal	RTI
Mindanao Youth for Development (MYDev)	Philippines	2013–2019	Youth workforce development (ages 15–24)	Conflict-affected	Non-formal	EDC
The Pakistan Reading Project (PRP)	Pakistan	2013–2020	Primary (grades 1 and 2)	Conflict-affected	Formal	International Rescue Committee
Quality Instruction Towards Access and Basic Education Improvement (QITABI)	Lebanon	2014–2020	Primary (grades 1–4)	Crisis-affected	Formal	World Learning
QITABI 2		2019–2024	Primary (grades 1–6)		Formal	
Early Childhood Development Mass Activity (Sisimpur)	Bangladesh	2017–2021	Pre-primary and primary (ages 3–8)	Stable and Crisis-affected	Non-formal	Sesame Workshop Bangladesh

[15] "Conflict-affected" describes a country, region, community that has experienced armed conflict and/or recently terminated armed conflict, which is in contention over the control of government and/or territory that results in armed force between two parties, at least one being a government of a state. Conflict-affected also includes countries, regions, or communities indirectly affected by conflict due to population displacement, reallocation of government resources, or diminished capacity. "Crisis-affected" describes a country, region, or community that is experiencing or recently experienced a crisis. This also includes countries indirectly affected by a crisis due to population displacement, reallocation of government resources, or diminished capacity. Crises include natural hazards, health epidemics, lawlessness, endemic crime and violence, and climate vulnerabilities (USAID, 2018).

[16] "Formal" education are learning opportunities provided in a system of schools, colleges, and universities and other educational institutions. It usually involves full-time education for children and young people. "Non-formal" education takes place both within and outside educational institutions and caters to people of all ages. It does not always lead to certification. Non-formal education programs are characterized by their variety, flexibility, and ability to respond quickly to new educational needs of children or adults. They are often designed for specific groups of learners, such as those who are too old for their grade level, those who do not attend formal school, or adults. Curricula may be based on formal education or on new approaches (USAID, 2018; INEE, 2010).

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

The document analysis phase began by undertaking a thorough search of documents related to each activity on the Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC) to gather a comprehensive list of activity documents for review. The research team then contacted each Mission requesting additional documentation on the activity's SEL-related component, such as needs assessments or landscape analysis reports; SEL activity design-related documents; annual reports; evaluation or research studies; education materials on SEL including lesson plans; teacher training materials on SEL; and monitoring and evaluation plans and subsequent data collection tools. The availability of documents on the DEC and from the Mission varied across the case studies.

Next, the research team conducted a systematic review of all documents, using a detailed document review matrix that corresponded to the research questions. The team's SEL expert conducted coding workshops to ensure high inter-coder reliability and to resolve any discrepancies in coding. The evaluation or research studies; monitoring and evaluation plans and subsequent data collection tools; and SEL-related education materials including teacher training manuals were of the greatest usefulness to this research. Activity design documents were useful when available, but the research team was unable to obtain documents for some activities. A full summary of the documents reviewed for each case study is included in Annex A.

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Once the team completed most of the document review, team members conducted KIIs using three types of semi-structured interview guides: 1) activities with explicit SEL skills instruction; 2) activities with primarily school climate interventions; and 3) youth workforce development activities. A total of 49 key informants were interviewed across the eight case studies, both from the relevant implementing partner and USAID. All KIIs were conducted in English, with the exception of KIIs for the two Honduran case studies, which were conducted in Spanish.

Both inductive and deductive approaches were used to analyze KII data. Using a deductive approach and to anchor the analysis against a common framework, the research team developed a codebook representing the key research questions and preliminary themes identified from the document analysis. The codebook was iteratively updated with inductive codes that emerged during KII analysis. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and coded using Dedoose, a qualitative coding software. Integrating findings from the systematic document review and KII analysis for each research and sub-research question, team members prepared memos for each case study, which were then used to inform the cross-case synthesis.

LIMITATIONS

There were a few limitations to this study:

- As noted earlier, the availability of the documents on the DEC and from each Mission varied greatly by case study. For activities that undertook an implicit approach to SEL (QITABI/Lebanon and PRP/Pakistan), documentation on SEL was somewhat limited.

- KIIs were limited to an average of five respondents total from USAID and implementing partners for each case study. Because of the key informants' role as past or current SEL activity designers, implementers, and donors, it is possible that they emphasized best practices rather than challenges or lessons learned. Therefore, to the extent possible, key informants' responses were triangulated with findings from document analysis to validate their responses.

- Case studies were selected from USAID basic education programs which do not necessarily represent a broad spectrum of emerging evidence-based best practices on the design, implementation, and measurement of SEL interventions. The SEL field is rich and diverse, hence the limited number of case studies is not a representative sample.

3. FINDINGS

SEL DESIGN PHASE

DEFINING SEL AND RELATED TERMS IN ACTIVITY DESIGN

The SEL and related terminology preferred by various activities reflected the particular context where the activity was implemented, the SEL framework adopted by implementing partners, and desired outcomes of the activities. Table 2 displays the terminology for SEL used in each activity, along with the associated SEL framework, competence areas, and skills fostered. Some findings across the activities are described below:

- Activities that targeted the primary and lower-secondary age groups in classroom contexts (ALE/Honduras, LARA/Uganda, ECR/Nigeria, and QITABI 2/Lebanon) mainly used the terminology of "social and emotional skills" or SEL, whereas youth workforce development activities (EF/Honduras and MYDev/Philippines) used "life skills." QITABI 1/Lebanon and PRP/Pakistan both lacked a clear definition or any mention of SEL in their activity documents.

- Competence areas and skills promoted by each activity varied but were mostly decided based on a specific global SEL framework adopted by each activity.

- Although competence areas and skills promoted under "social and emotional skills" and "life skills" terms were closely related and overlap—such as self-management, communication, and teamwork—activities that used "life skills" terminology often aimed to address additional locally specific goals or challenges.

  - For example, youth workforce development activities (EF/Honduras and MYDev/Philippines) emphasized the soft skills necessary for workforce outcomes, such as employment norms and work habits.

  - Sisimpur/Bangladesh, although targeted for pre-primary and lower-primary levels of education, preferred "life skills" as a terminology due to its intention to address local challenges such as child marriage and child labor through teaching critical thinking skills.

– LARA/Uganda used both "social and emotional competencies" and "life skills" terms while describing the relationship as "building social and emotional competencies contribute to building life skills."

Table 2. Overview of Social and Emotional Skills across the Nine Activities

ACTIVITY	TERMINOLOGY USED	SEL FRAMEWORK	SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE AREAS AND SKILLS FOSTERED
ALE/Honduras	Social and emotional skills	CASEL's SEL Framework	Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making
ECR/Nigeria	Social and emotional skills	IRC's SEL framework	Executive function, emotional regulation, positive social skills, conflict resolution skills, and perseverance
EF/Honduras	Life skills	EF's life skills and basic labor competencies framework[17]	Personal development, effective communication, habits and office/employment norms, labor market readiness, entrepreneurship, leadership, and basic labor competencies (comprehensive reading, applied math skills, information analysis)
LARA/Uganda	SEL competencies and life skills	CASEL's SEL Framework	Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making
MYDev/Philippines	Life skills	EDC's Work Ready Now! Framework	Personal development, interpersonal communication, work habits and conduct, leadership and teamwork, safety and health at work, workers' rights and responsibilities, financial fitness, exploring entrepreneurship, civic engagement
PRP/Pakistan	Not explicitly used	N/A	N/A
QITABI/Lebanon	Not explicitly used	N/A	N/A
QITABI 2/Lebanon	Social and emotional skills	(Draft) Core SEL Framework, specifically developed for the activity	Six skill areas in the current draft: ethical and spiritual values, working memory and planning/organizational skills, inhibitory control, intellectual values, adaptability/flexibility, and self-knowledge
Sisimpur/Bangladesh	Life skills	Sesame Workshop's global framework	Critical thinking, decision-making, voicing opinion, empathy, sympathy, imagination, observation, asking questions, team spirit, friendship, sharing, cooperation, need vs. want, conflict resolution

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[17] While EF/Honduras had its own framework based on the evidence from its predecessor project, Improving Education for Work, Learning, and Success (*Mejorando Educación para Trabajar, Aprender y Superarse* [METAS]), METAS was implemented by EDC; therefore, it is indicated to be based on the EDC's life skills framework.

Key Finding #1: Agreeing on context-appropriate SEL terminology and SEL skills definition with in-country stakeholders facilitates effective SEL implementation.

Considering most SEL concepts and frameworks have been developed and researched in HICs, programs should pre-empt challenges and facilitate the effective implementation of SEL interventions by having an agreed-upon preferred terminology and definition of SEL, as well as specific competence areas and skills among local stakeholders in a specific country context. For activities where social and emotional skills were clearly defined, key informants had a strong understanding of SEL and often referred to the SEL framework used in the activity. However, for activities where SEL was not clearly defined, but rather implicitly integrated, activity staff expressed inconsistent understanding of SEL and its role within the activity.

- In QITABI 2/Lebanon, activity staff and national stakeholders at the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) did not completely agree upon the definition of social and emotional skills at the design stage, and tensions emerged between national stakeholders during implementation, even though SEL seemed to be a well-accepted concept by the MEHE. For example, the MEHE did not approve the distribution of some story books focused on expressing one's emotions because they perceived this as a foreign concept.

  > *"I think the Ministry was not ready for books about knowing one's body and expressing emotions...One of the books was about confronting your parents and things like that. So that's why I am saying that we really need to agree on the definitions of these skills. And then, whatever we propose, we can propose from within and relate it to the definitions that we have agreed on, and they can see where we're coming from. I think such agreement is extremely important, and I don't think it's going to be easy." – Activity Staff, QITABI 2, Lebanon*

- Those in the Bangladesh context (Sisimpur/Bangladesh) initially perceived SEL as a Western education concept in conflict with religious teachings and the national curriculum. School teachers were initially hesitant to integrate social and emotional skills into their traditional curriculum. This may partly explain why the activity preferred to use "life skills" over SEL terminology.

  > *"In Bangladesh, as you know, there are also Islamic schools (Madarsa). So, we are really facing difficulties working with them; we could not even distribute materials to the Madarsas. Because they are Islamic schools, they are only boys or only girls meaning there is no co-education. So, they find it difficult when they find girls and boys in the same material. That could be one of the reasons they find it difficult to approve it. Another reason is the clothing because traditional Islamic clothing is different from the normal way of life. So, they also find that it is not appropriate for the Islamic schools." – Activity Staff, Sisimpur, Bangladesh*

- In contrast, the ECR/Nigeria team did not find resistance in northern Nigeria from teachers teaching at Islamic religious education centers (Tsangaya and Qut'anic centers). Key informants emphasized the importance of discussing the alignment of SEL terminology and skills with the existing Nigerian curriculum with all levels of in-country stakeholders.

INCORPORATING SEL INTO A THEORY OF CHANGE

Seven out of nine activities directly referenced social and emotional skills development as a specific outcome within their theory of change, although specific competence areas and skills of focus were not typically included. Most of the activities posited SEL skills acquisition as one of the immediate results in the theory of change as means to achieve other outcomes, such as reading skills, employability, and reduced school-level violence. Only Sisimpur/Bangladesh described SEL skills development along with reading skills as the activity's objective without other associated outcomes. QITABI/Lebanon and PRP/Pakistan did not directly reference social and emotional skills development but had "improved school environment" as immediate results in their theory of change. Theory of change outcomes of the nine activities are listed below.[18] (More detailed description of SEL-related outcomes in each activity's theory of change can be found in Annex B.)

- Improved reading skills (LARA/Uganda, PRP/Pakistan, and QITABI/Lebanon)

- Improved employability (EF/Honduras and MYDev/Philippines)

- Improved access to quality and protective education opportunities (ECR/Nigeria and QITABI/Lebanon)

- Reduced school-level violence, including school-related gender-based violence (ALE/Honduras and LARA/Uganda)

- Reduced potential to engage in community-level violence and crime (ALE/Honduras, EF/Honduras, and MYDev/Philippines)

- Improved national education system's self-reliance (QITABI 2/Lebanon)

- Enhanced early-grade reading and select life skills (literacy, health, nutrition, safety, environment, gender equality, personal and social responsibility, and mutual understanding) (Sisimpur/Bangladesh)

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[18] Activities categorized under each outcome are only those with a direct description of such outcomes in their theory of change. For example, while PRP/Pakistan and QITABI/Lebanon also promoted SEL and life skills through various supplementary reading materials, they are only categorized under "improved reading skills" outcome because it was the only outcome that appeared in their theory of change.

Key Finding #2: Incorporating the role of SEL into a theory of change based on specific needs identified is critical to ensuring a consistent understanding and vision of SEL across stakeholders.

When activities incorporated SEL into a theory of change based on specific needs identified by the school and community, key informants were able to consistently and clearly elaborate SEL's role in a theory of change. The specific needs were identified from needs assessments (ALE/Honduras and ECR/Nigeria) or evaluation findings of a predecessor activity (MYDev/Philippines and QITABI 2/Lebanon).

- ALE/Honduras conducted a school safety needs assessment with students, teachers, and administrators, which indicated that target youth had many socio-emotional issues, such as feeling sad and hopeless, having suicidal thoughts, and reacting inappropriately to stress. Based on these findings, the ALE team included SEL in the activity's theory of change to provide young learners with tools to analyze their feelings, regulate emotions, and ultimately improve school retention and safety.

> *"Social-emotional learning was included because, through a school safety study that we did at our target educational institutions, we saw that the target population had many socio-affective issues, youth with low self-esteem, youth who found no meaning in life, youth who have no clear goals, and many social-emotional, socio-affective-related conflicts and problems. So, we saw that to be able to improve school safety, not only should we improve the operator's physical and safety conditions, but [we] also needed to address the emotional issues of each of the students, which would obviously allow for continuity, would make them stay at the educational institutions." – Activity Staff, ALE, Honduras*

- In the Philippines, MYDev integrated its life skills module based on the lessons learned from its predecessor program, the Education Quality and Access for Learning and Livelihood Skills (EQuALLS) program.

> *"A bakery owner said, 'I don't really care if the student doesn't know how to bake. I am a baker; I can teach him that. What I cannot teach him is coming to work on time and telling me if he's not going to show up for work.' This was repeated in many conversations with business owners. So socio-emotional or life skills was one of the major gaps that we found in programming and so we made sure that it was addressed in MYDev." – Activity Staff, MYDev, Philippines*

CONTEXTUALIZING SEL COMPETENCE AREAS AND SKILLS

This study defines contextualization as "a process of adapting global standards to make their content meaningful to the given context, using a bottom-up approach where local stakeholders inform global standards and implementation tailored to their needs" (Allaf *et al.*, 2014; Machingura and Nicolai, 2018). All activities undertook contextualization, although what was contextualized and the extent of contextualization varied. Contextualization of SEL in the nine activities can be analyzed based on the following: 1) contextualization of SEL competence areas and skills, and 2) contextualization of SEL teaching and learning content.

Generally, global SEL frameworks and subsequent competence areas were first adopted without substantive validation or contextualization. Instead, much of the contextualization occurred later at the skills level. QITABI 2/Lebanon was the only activity where contextualization occurred at the competence area level.[19] Three approaches of contextualizing competence areas and skills used by the activities are further explained below with specific examples:

- **Contextualizing competence areas and skills through a ground-up approach** (QITABI 2/Lebanon). The activity team developed a locally driven SEL framework based on the competence areas and skills valued and prioritized in existing SEL and related frameworks and further validated by local stakeholders, including educators and learners.

- **Contextualizing skills through expert consultation** (EF/Honduras, MYDev/Philippines, and Sisimpur/Bangladesh). Implementers adopted competence areas from a global SEL framework and then validated the various skills with local experts, such as ministry officials, educators, and community leaders. For youth workforce development activities, implementers also consulted technical and vocational training agency officials and private-sector representatives. Throughout the process, culturally relevant skills were identified and prioritized.

  – EF/Honduras adopted competence areas from an EDC-developed life skills framework (*e.g.*, labor market competencies). The activity prioritized skills based on job skills required for different technical positions. For example, participants applying to construction positions received basic mathematics skills prioritized over reading comprehension skills.

  – Sisimpur/Bangladesh started with Sesame Workshop's global framework and validated these through expert consultation. The team prioritized sub-skills such as critical thinking, decision-making, conflict resolution, emotional regulation, and voicing opinion to connect SEL skills with social issues, such as child marriage and child trafficking.

- **Contextualizing skills through national curriculum mapping** (ALE/Honduras, ECR/Nigeria, and LARA/Uganda). Activity teams began with a global SEL framework and validated the various skills by comparing them to the relevant SEL skills in the country's education curricula (formal and non-formal). Often, expert consultation then validated these comparisons again. For example:

  – ECR/Nigeria compared IRC's SEL framework with the physical and health education curriculum in formal and religious education curriculum in non-formal schools. The results of such mapping were shared and validated through an expert consultation workshop, where conflict resolution was identified as an important SEL skill.

  – ALE/Honduras compared CASEL's SEL framework with the Honduras national Physical Education (PE) curriculum. Through the process, local teachers and trainers prioritized "seeking or offering support and help" as a social and emotional skill, emphasizing the importance of knowing how and when to ask for help.

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[19] Since PRP/Pakistan and QITABI/Lebanon did not explicitly define or foster SEL competence areas and skills, contextualization of competence areas and skills from these activities is not included.

> *"The SEL lessons are adapted to the basic national curriculum, which is the resource we have here in Honduras. That guides teachers on how to deliver their class. We compared each of the topics, for example, all the topics covered in PASE, and we reached the conclusion that they do appear in the basic national curriculum in our country, in the education system." – Activity Staff, ALE, Honduras*

Key Finding #3: Contextualizing competence areas and skills through a ground-up approach helps lay the groundwork for stronger SEL institutionalization.

QITABI 2/Lebanon undertook a comprehensive contextualization process to develop a national core SEL framework with locally driven competence areas (labeled as skill areas in QITABI 2) and skills. First, the team facilitated the coding of five SEL-related frameworks in use by two entities within the Lebanese government, MEHE-DOPS and CERD. After being trained on the Harvard Taxonomy Project, the two entities took four months to complete the systematic coding to distill the most emphasized skill areas and skills in Lebanon. Then, national and international stakeholders came together at a workshop to confirm the draft skill areas and skills developed during the coding and also to identify those that were de-emphasized or missing. Next, Lebanese SEL experts, including the Lebanese MEHE, defined each of the skill areas and skills. Although some skill areas such as working memory and inhibitory control were adopted from global frameworks, others such as ethical and spiritual values and adaptability, were unique to the Lebanese SEL framework. The last step in finalizing the draft national SEL framework is a qualitative research study, where prioritized SEL skills are going to be validated by teachers, principals, students, parents, and policymakers, which was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The finalized national SEL framework will inform CERD's development of national teacher training modules on SEL and MEHE-DOPS's development of SEL measurement tools.

Key Finding #4: Contextualizing social and emotional skills through national curriculum mapping is effective to enhancing cultural and contextual relevance of SEL.

LARA/Uganda adopted CASEL's five competence areas in defining SEL. To better contextualize and prioritize social and emotional skills under each competence area, the team mapped each lesson from the activity curricula ("UKU Activities") per SEL competence area. The activity then validated and compared them to specific life skills defined in the national life skills curriculum from grades 1 to 4 in a matrix format partly shown below. The mapping exercise indicated how each of the five SEL competence areas was related to the life skills curriculum and which of the competence areas were prioritized in the Journeys curriculum (*e.g.*, relationship skills, social awareness, and self-management).

Table 3. Excerpt from the Matrix of Activities by Thematic Life Skills and Values in Journeys Activity Handbook for Pupils, LARA/Uganda

UKU ACTIVITIES	PRIMARY SEL COMPETENCY	THEMATIC CURRICULUM LIFE SKILLS & VALUES			
		P1	P2	P3	P4
Making a new friend	Self-awareness	Effective communication, decision-making, friendliness and appreciation, friendship formation	Effective communication, friendship formation and interpersonal relationship, sharing, togetherness and appreciation	Decision-making, friendship formation	Effective communication, friendship formation and interpersonal relationship, sharing and appreciation
Why I want to be a Cow	Social-awareness	Identity	Critical thinking, mobility and orientation, creative thinking, values, empathy, responsibility	Assertiveness	Inquiry, drawing values, appreciation, tolerance

CONTEXUALIZING SEL TEACHING AND LEARNING CONTENT

Eight activities (ALE/Honduras, ECR/Nigeria, EF/Honduras, MYDev/Philippines, LARA/Uganda, PRP/Pakistan, QITABI/Lebanon, and Sisimpur/Bangladesh) undertook different processes to contextualize SEL teaching and learning content, including SEL curricula and lesson plans, teacher training modules, mass media content, and supplementary reading materials. QITABI 2/Lebanon is not yet at the teaching and learning content contextualization stage, as the team first plans to finalize the core SEL competence areas and skills before contextualizing SEL teaching and learning materials. Four contextualization approaches applied are listed and further described below:

- **Limited contextualization of content** (ECR/Nigeria and EF/Honduras). Activity teams begin with a global curriculum and then contextualize it by replacing culturally inappropriate exercises with locally relevant terminologies, pedagogical practices, and examples. For example, the ECR/Nigeria team wrote its SEL lesson plans mostly at the implementer's headquarters in New York while closely

working with a Nigerian SEL expert. Contextualization of these SEL lesson plans was limited to changing terminology, names, and minor examples to be locally appropriate and did not include a formal pilot testing in a classroom context. The ECR/Nigeria team was also tasked with developing SEL teaching and learning content under a tight timeline because it was an emergency response activity.

> *"Initially the first design workshop was with the academic and training partners as part of the activity so it was meant to be contextualized from the ground up. But we started with a framework and a structure of social and emotional skills and competencies that fit within the standard SEL frameworks that were being used in the U.S. at the time. And then, we tried to build it to the extent possible within the context." –* *Activity Staff, ECR, Nigeria*

- **Rigorous contextualization through pilot testing** (ALE/Honduras, LARA/Uganda, and Sisimpur/Bangladesh). Activity teams conduct formal pilot testing of SEL teaching and learning content with learners, educators, and parents to develop culturally and contextually relevant materials.

  - ALE/Honduras conducted pilot testing of each SEL intervention for the 25 SEL-themed PE lessons and 17 SEL-themed Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) lessons.

  - LARA/Uganda piloted USAID-developed School-related Gender Based Violence (SRGBV) interventions with teachers, students, and communities. Based on the outcome of the pilot testing, the team revised many details of the interventions to make them more socially acceptable.

- **Contextualization of supplementary reading materials** (PRP/Pakistan and QITABI/Lebanon). Activity teams have local experts select the SEL topics of supplementary reading materials that are culturally and contextually relevant, as well as at appropriate grade levels.

  - PRP/Pakistan carefully selected and contextualized supplementary reading materials with the support of local stakeholders, which were then reviewed by provincial and regional Material Development Committee and Material Review Committees. Through such a process, the team developed reading materials on girls' education, child protection, and hygiene and sanitation, to name a few.

  - The QITABI literacy committee, composed of Arabic reading experts, selected QITABI/Lebanon's leveled classroom library books based on criteria aligned with the national Arabic language curriculum. In selecting SEL-themed supplementary reading materials, the committee also applied additional lenses of language difficulty, emotions, social skills, citizenship, and moral values.

- **Participatory content development with youth** (MYDev/Philippines). Activity teams co-develop SEL activity contents with learners. For example, the MYDev team developed two additional training modules on resilience in response to the Marawi Crisis in 2018 and used a co-design approach between EDC and local stakeholders including learners themselves, creating a context specifically derived for Mindanao.

Key Finding #5: Contextualizing SEL content through rigorous pilot testing with learners and educators is critical to design effective SEL interventions.

Sisimpur/Bangladesh first contextualized Sesame Workshop's global curriculum by prioritizing social and emotional skills relevant in the context. Then, activity staff created characters or Muppets reflecting local culture. The Muppets teach critical SEL skills and locally important issues, such as child labor, child trafficking, and child marriage, through kids' television program and supplementary reading materials.

Before fully developing TV show content and print materials, the Sisimpur team conducted a formative assessment on a sample of newly developed TV episode segments with young learners and two formative assessments for storybook contents with learners, teachers, and parents to understand its effectiveness.

"So, formative is designed to generally give us—are we going in the right direction? It's not intended to assess children's learning as a result of the TV show or the community engagement; it's in a pilot phase. We use the findings from formative to help us figure out how, when we do have, whether it's the full broadcast or the full scaled-up community engagement intervention that we believe children will be able to effectively learn what we want them to learn." – Activity Staff, Sisimpur, Bangladesh

ADDRESSING EQUITY AND INCLUSION THROUGH SEL INTERVENTIONS[20]

The nine focus activities carefully considered the concepts of equity and inclusion in activity design and implementation. Depending on activity objectives and regional focus, marginalized populations were identified and integrated into different aspects of the activity, including curriculum development, stakeholder engagement, and measurement. According to the 2018 USAID Education Policy, Marginalized Children and Vulnerable Groups include *"girls, children affected by or emerging from armed conflict or humanitarian crises, children with disabilities, children in remote or rural areas (including those who lack access to safe water and sanitation), religious or ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, orphans and children affected by HIV/AIDS, child laborers, married adolescents, and victims of trafficking."*

ALE/Honduras and LARA/Uganda both designed SEL interventions not only to provide a specialized intervention for at-risk learners but as a strategy to reduce barriers in learning environments. Both activities aimed to improve school attendance and retention by reducing school-based violence (SBV) and building an enabling school environment through a holistic integration of violence prevention curriculum, awareness generation, capacity-building, community engagement, reporting mechanisms, and care. ALE/Honduras and LARA/Uganda purposely integrated SEL as a key component to counter SBV (including SRGBV), with the underlying assumption that with strengthened SEL knowledge and skills, students and teachers will be better equipped to identify, avoid, report, and seek assistance for various forms of SBV.

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[20] Equity and inclusion was understood according to the UNESCO (2018) and UNESCO (2020)'s definitions. Equity in education "considers the social justice ramifications of education in relation to the fairness, justness and impartiality of its distribution at all levels or educational sub-sectors" (UNESCO, 2018, p.17). Inclusion in education "removes the barriers limiting the participation and achievement of all learners, respect diverse needs, abilities and characteristics and that eliminate all forms of discrimination in learning environment" (UNESCO, 2020).

While some activities focused on improving school climate and promoting educational equity, other activities aimed to increase employment opportunities and outcomes for at-risk, out-of-school youth in crisis-affected settings, advancing goals of inclusion. EF/Honduras offered trainings on life skills and fundamental labor competencies—complemented by mentorship and counseling support to Honduran youth affected by violence, crime, and irregular migration—to enhance their SEL competencies of resilience, leadership, communication, and conflict resolution. Similarly, in the crisis-affected Mindanao region, MYDev/Philippines engaged vulnerable and out-of-school youth through intensive life skills trainings and civic engagement interventions, with the intent of promoting positive community engagement and increasing their employability.

Similarly, ECR/Nigeria used its SEL interventions to advance the goal of inclusion. Although ECR/Nigeria did not exclusively target youth, the activity included a vocational training component specifically for crisis-affected and displaced Nigerian youth ages 13–17, with special attention on girls and youth with disabilities. ECR established separate, age-appropriate and gender-sensitive learning centers for youth and adolescent girls to ensure their safety and continued access to quality, non-formal education. These centers provided disabled youth not only with basic literacy, numeracy, SEL lessons, and psychosocial support but also with training on locally employable skills, such as leatherwork, bead-making, vegetable oil extraction, and shoe-making for additional income generation.

Key Finding #6: Equity and inclusion can be advanced through SEL interventions by building learners' agency and fostering inclusive school climate.

ALE/Honduras and LARA/Uganda used SEL interventions to promote an equitable and inclusive school and community environment. ALE/Honduras focused on advancing the goal of inclusion by focusing on teaching skills, such as tolerance, acceptance, social awareness, and empathy in teaching SEL to create an inclusive school environment for students from diverse backgrounds. LARA/Uganda focused on uplifting student voice and agency to challenge schools and communities' existing inequities.

The ALE/Honduras design factored in context-specific challenges in Honduras, such as prevalent gender biases and social norms, stigmatization of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex (LGBTI) community, and segregation of ethnic minorities, particularly Afro-Caribbean and Miskito communities. In addition, youth from gang-associated families and high-crime communities, youth with disabilities, and those with a history of drug use were also identified as marginalized populations and included in the scope of the activity. SEL materials reflected ALE's inclusion efforts, intentionally promoting a sense of tolerance, acceptance, social awareness, and empathy among students. *Docentes por la Paz* (Educators for Peace) is an example of a dedicated SRGBV module in ALE's curriculum, which was developed to raise awareness among students and school staff.

> *"LGBTI is more challenging because of the age group we have and is still a very sensitive topic. Being a highly religious country, there's still some stigma associated with it. So, we've been very careful with that aspect. Yes, we tried to talk about children who may be perceived as different. But we try to be careful, so that we don't stigmatize further and do more harm than good." – Activity Staff, ALE, Honduras*

In Uganda, LARA's underlying assumption is that with strengthened self-confidence, agency, and social awareness, students are empowered to avoid violence, follow reporting protocols, and seek help from trusted adults. In addition to building learner's SEL capacities, the activity also trains teachers and school management committees to detect early signs of bullying and use non-violent disciplinary methods, both of which collectively ensure a safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environment for all students. Although the school is central to violence reduction, LARA also deliberately engages parents and community members to foster attitudes of gender equality and balanced power relations on school premises, as well as work collaboratively with school staff to design and implement SRGBV prevention interventions.

> *"So, one of the reasons we have an intervention for early warning signs is to look out for signs that a learner could be under distress, could have some invisible impairment, could have something that is making him or her different from others—to help make sure that teachers emphasize inclusiveness and that all children achieve the same goal of learning. So, these different aspects are put into consideration with the underlying factor that children are children. Girls, boys, physically handicapped, sight impairment, hearing impairment, whatever the difference is, they're all children. And they must feel comfortable and safe when they are at school or in classroom or in the community. So, that was our approach to equity. It goes beyond gender. It goes beyond the visible aspects to even the invisible ones." – Activity Staff, LARA, Uganda*

SEL IMPLEMENTATION AND MEASUREMENT

This report categorizes the following six approaches in promoting and integrating SEL into activities: 1) Explicit SEL skills instruction; 2) Integration with school curriculum areas; 3) Educator instructional practices; 4) School climate and culture strategy; 5) Partnership across family-school-community contexts; and 6) Policy adoption by national institutions.

All nine activities used multiple approaches to integrate SEL into each activity. Table 4 displays the details of the SEL approaches used by each activity, followed by definitions of SEL integration approaches, implementation details, and some lessons learned during implementation, where applicable:

Table 4. SEL Integration Approaches Adopted by the Activities

SEL INTEGRATION APPROACHES	ALE	ECR	EF	LARA	MYDEV	PRP	QITABI	QITABI 2	SISIMPUR
Explicit SEL skills instruction	X	X	X	X	X			X	
Integration with school curriculum areas	X	X				X	X	X	X
Educator instructional practices	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
School climate and culture strategy	X			X		X	X	X	
Partnership across family-school-community contexts			X	X	X			X	
Policy adoption by national institutions	X			X	X	X	X	X	

- Explicit SEL Skills Instruction

  Typically, an activity using this approach provides learners with structured, comprehensive, and sequential lesson plans or training modules that include explicit instruction in social and emotional skills or soft skills. "Explicit" is defined as having clear and specific learning objectives and specifically targeted skills over general ones (Durlak *et al.*, 2011). This approach is usually provided in classroom settings, both in formal and non-formal learning spaces, and often uses curriculum as entry points. Sometimes stand-alone SEL lessons are provided as a part of the regular school day or during another school curriculum already on the timetable. Another approach of an explicit SEL skills instruction includes a "Kernels approach," which is defined as "low-cost, brief, targeted strategies for specific behaviors" (Jones *et al.*, 2017b). The Kernels approach enables teachers to provide explicit SEL skills instructions throughout the day for targeted behaviors without a comprehensive stand-alone curriculum.

Implementation Details: Five activities (ALE/Honduras, ECR/Nigeria, EF/Honduras, LARA/Uganda, and MYDev/Philippines) provided SEL skills instructions based on specifically targeted social and emotional skills in learning objectives of lesson plans. All activities (other than QITABI 2/Lebanon) had sequenced, structured stand-alone lesson-based curricula (at least 30 minutes per lesson), which was implemented in either a formal (ALE/Honduras and LARA/Uganda) or non-formal (ECR/Nigeria, EF/Honduras, and MYDev/Philippines) setting. While QITABI 2 is still in the design phase, it is implementing initial explicit SEL lessons through e-learning resources, using the Kernels approach. Some specific examples are:

— ECR/Nigeria provided weekly stand-alone 30-minute SEL lessons on specific social and emotional skills, over 32 lessons in nine months. Informants perceived the scripted, detailed lesson plans— and the scope and sequence—crucial for the learning facilitators, who were mostly not formally trained as teachers.

— Both youth workforce development activities (EF/Honduras and MYDev/Philippines) trained youth on lesson-based life skill modules (104 hours for EF and 80–100 training hours for MYDev) with specific, focused competence areas/skills as foundations before starting occupation-specific technical training. They both noted that providing only explicit soft skills instruction during the life skills training implementations was not enough to encourage long-term behavior changes in practice. For the case of EF/Honduras, it later integrated the five life skills prioritized by employers and implementers—present yourself properly, be punctual, be able to share your story, be proactive, focus on results—into existing technical training sessions to practice newly taught skills throughout the activity. For example, participants practiced behavior-indicating skills such as a firm handshake and eye contact daily during a technical training module. Meanwhile, MYDev/Philippines stressed the importance of community-based service-learning projects to apply the skills learned in lessons. During such projects, youth identify, plan, resource, and implement to apply the skills and attitudes they learned during the structured life skills training to contribute back to their communities.

— LARA/Uganda designed and implemented 39 scripted SEL/life skills lessons using the Journeys Activity Handbook for pupils during the 40-minute mandatory extracurricular time at school. Each lesson defines specific social and emotional skills and respective life skill themes targeted to be fostered. Learners discuss and practice these skills during the weekly lessons and interventions. Key informants perceived the implementation of the Journeys Handbook for pupils to be inconsistent across schools, in some cases. The activity seemingly did not provide explicit lessons in a structured or sequential manner, and some lessons were skipped. Schools also tended to prioritize reading interventions over SEL interventions.

— In Lebanon, although teachers and other local stakeholders are yet to validate the core SEL framework for QITABI 2, the activity team created brief YouTube videos on explicit SEL instruction for educators and learners to use mainly for remote learning both during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The minute-long videos used engaging and age-appropriate games such as, Simon Says and the Senses and Memory game to promote self-regulation and executive function using a play-based approach.

- Integration with School Curriculum Areas

  An activity using this approach fosters social and emotional skills through school subjects, such as literacy, math, social studies, or physical education. This approach typically includes a lesson plan on a school subject (such as literacy) while also developing social and emotional skills either explicitly or implicitly. An explicit SEL integration would identify a particular social and emotional skill (such as standing up for the rights of others) and incorporate it through reading material with an SEL theme or including learning activities on the SEL theme throughout a lesson. For example, learners read a book about a character whose friends discriminate because he belongs to a minority ethnicity. Then, learners role-play how to stand up against injustice or write about their own experience of being mistreated because they were different. Implicit integration occurs when an SEL skill is fostered but not defined by an educator (mainly because the educator is not trained on SEL and the teaching of specific social and emotional skills). For example, learners might read a story about the character being discriminated against because of his minority status without necessarily setting a goal to teach the skill of standing up for the rights of others. In this case, lesson plans would not typically include learning activities, such as discussion, role-play, and writing, to further develop the social and emotional skill. This approach often uses curriculum and teaching and learning materials as entry points. An activity can use both the "Explicit SEL skills instruction" and "Integration with school curriculum areas" approaches, and they are not exclusive.

  Implementation Details: SEL was integrated into literacy or reading (QITABI/Lebanon, PRP/Pakistan, and Sisimpur/Bangladesh); both reading and math (ECR/Nigeria and QITABI 2/Lebanon); and Physical Education (PE) (ALE/Honduras) subjects. QITABI 2/Lebanon, ALE/Honduras, ECR/Nigeria, and Sisimpur/Bangladesh integrated social and emotional skills explicitly by defining the specific skills developed through SEL interventions and instructions (QITABI 2/Lebanon, ALE/Honduras, and ECR/Nigeria) or supplementary reading materials (Sisimpur/Bangladesh). QITABI/Lebanon and PRP/Pakistan also provided supplementary reading materials with SEL themes but used an implicit integration approach because the activities did not define specific social and emotional skills fostered through the interventions. Some examples are:

  – ECR/Nigeria integrated brief SEL instructions into literacy and numeracy lessons based on lessons learned from the first year's programming, which only provided explicit SEL lessons. On a weekly basis, after learning specific social and emotional skills during weekly stand-alone SEL lessons, a brief SEL classroom activity was integrated into literacy and numeracy lessons of that week to provide opportunities for learners to practice the skill and reinforce the concept.

  – QITABI/Lebanon and PRP/Pakistan provided various supplementary reading materials aligned with SEL skills and themes, including self-awareness, empathy, problem-solving, conflict resolution (QITABI), and girls' education, creating harmony and respecting differently abled children (PRP/Pakistan). Although the activity expected the provided materials to improve learners' social and emotional knowledge and behavior in addition to their reading skills, specific skills were not defined and taught explicitly.

  – ALE/Honduras uniquely used Physical Education (PE) as a subject for integration, with explicit 45-minutes lessons. This was because: 1) PE attracts a broader range of students compared to other academic subjects and is also better at engaging teachers; 2) using sport games and group dynamics provides a space for students to express their emotions naturally; 3) oftentimes PE is

given less priority than core academic subjects, so the Honduras Ministry could take the opportunity to develop a new implementation methodology for it.

- Educator instructional practices

  This approach provides professional development opportunities to educators and other adults with teaching roles on pedagogical practices, school subject training, learner-focused pedagogies, or classroom management techniques, fostering a positive school climate and supporting the teaching of social and emotional skills to learners. The approach often uses educators and the school climate as entry points.

  Implementation Details: Many perceived that continuous and diverse professional development opportunities for educators were necessary to adequately support the social and emotional needs of learners. All but Sisimpur/Bangladesh included some form of teacher training as an approach to integrate SEL into activities, although the types of training varied. Some examples are:

  – ECR/Nigeria and EF/Honduras recruited trainers/facilitators from relevant communities, who were not necessarily trained as teachers on instructional strategies, while creating child-friendly learning environments. Despite this lack of training, activity staff viewed trainers/facilitators as beneficial because they could better relate to learners affected by crisis. Further, they demonstrated a strong commitment to bringing positive changes to their own communities beyond the lifespan of the activity.

  – ALE/Honduras, PRP/Pakistan, and QITABI/Lebanon trained public school teachers on pedagogical approaches or subject content to foster learners' participation. ALE provided a 3-day, focused training on the 25 lesson plans, but no subsequent structured mentoring or coaching opportunities were provided.

  – QITABI/Lebanon's teacher training curriculum included classroom management and cultivating a safe, engaging, and learner-centered classroom environment, which was achieved through daily social interactions between teachers and learners and an interactive reading instruction. QITABI trained the government teacher trainers to roll out trainings in Arabic. Key informants from QITABI/Lebanon thought that each teacher's ability to implement various teaching methodologies was dependent on the individual teachers' commitment as well as the principal's buy-in at the school level.

  – PRP/Pakistan provided diverse teacher professional development opportunities through monthly teacher learning circles. There was only one module on SEL and child well-being, and teachers thought that more dedicated focus was necessary.

- School Climate and Culture Strategy

  An activity using this approach intentionally focuses on creating a safe and caring learning environment. This can be done through school- or institution-level policies that build classroom structures (for example, morning meetings or circle times) or school-wide initiatives that create a safe and caring climate (for example, school-wide bullying prevention campaign). This approach often uses school climate, educators, and administrators as entry points.

Implementation Details: Activities used positive school climate and culture strategies to reduce school-based violence (LARA/Uganda and ALE/Honduras) or improve reading skills (QITABI/Lebanon and QITABI 2/Lebanon). They also provided teacher instructional strategies and explicit SEL skills instructions. Some examples are:

– LARA/Uganda established a positive school climate with the goal of addressing SRGBV, specifically bullying, corporal punishment, and sexual harassment on school premises. The activity also strongly involved headmasters to ensure schoolwide implementation. Interventions to foster a positive school climate included establishing school-level mechanisms for SRGBV prevention and response, strengthening MoEST's child helplines, and providing grants to community-based organizations to support shift in community attitudes and belief towards gender equality and SRGBV.

– QITABI/Lebanon ensured that social interactions between teachers and learners was institutionalized in each classroom and reinforced by principals. QITABI 2 will support principals in designing specific school-level plans to improve school climate.

• Partnership Across Family-School-Community Contexts

An activity using this approach focuses on integrating learning across family, educational institutions, and community contexts where teaching and learning of SEL takes place. This includes initiatives to provide families with training sessions on how to support their children's social and emotional skills at home, partnerships with local business owners as mentors and apprenticeships for workforce development projects, and partnership with community-based organizations or religious institutions for volunteering or service-learning opportunities. This approach often uses family, community, local organizations, and private-sector organizations as entry points.

Implementation Details: Overall, activity design was driven by the understanding that the knowledge and well-being of learners are affected by varying levels of contextual factors beyond their educational environment. While activities were designed to strengthen the partnership across family-school-community contexts, limited interventions integrated teaching and learning of SEL across family, educational institutions, and community contexts. Instead, these approaches were informal and unfocused. Some examples are:

– In youth workforce development activities (MYDev/Philippines and EF/Honduras), local employers played a significant role as community partners. But MYDev/Philippines also maximized partnership among family, community, local government agencies, and private businesses to practice and improve life skills and civic engagement skills. To make the resilience training module more practical, MYDev also led youth designing community engagement projects to build support systems through their relationships with parents, community leaders, and broader community members.

– LARA/Uganda featured a structured community engagement manual on social and emotional skills/life skills that was aligned with lessons for learners and educators. The community handbook consisted of 31 interventions providing knowledge on a safe and caring school community and assisting parents to support learners' SEL skills development.

• Policy Adoption by National Institutions

This approach builds the capacity of national education authorities and intentionally advocates for the adoption of SEL-related curriculum, strategy, and training modules into the national education system. Initiatives work hand-in-hand with the Ministry of Education (MoE) to develop SEL contents and training the national and local MoE staff as trainers on SEL modules. This approach often uses policy and institution as entry points.

Implementation Details: All activities collaborated closely with the relevant ministries, mostly the Ministry of Education and its agencies, although the extent of partnership varied. Activities applied this approach to intentionally advocated or SEL-related curriculum, strategy, and training modules into the national education system. Some examples are:

– QITABI 2/Lebanon encouraged the Lebanese ministry departments to lead the national SEL framework development process. They are considered as a partner in potentially integrating the SEL competencies into grade 1 through 6 in Arabic, English, French, and math curricula.

– The PE curricula with SEL themes developed by ALE/Honduras was adopted by the Ministry, playing a key role in expanding its implementation.

– MYDev/Philippines's life skills training module will be offered as a part of formal technical and vocational education activities at the Philippines' national training agency.

Key Finding #7: Integrating SEL using multiple approaches and beyond the classroom context is effective in achieving positive outcomes.

- Activities that integrate SEL using multiple approaches across various contexts were considered to be more effective. Key informants perceived explicit SEL skills instruction as more effective than those only improving teacher instructional practices and providing SEL-themed reading materials. Key informants emphasized the importance of having shared clear goals, availability of SEL lesson plans and manuals, and its potential for policy adoption by national governments.

- While still early in the implementation phase, building on lessons from QITABI/Lebanon, QITABI 2/Lebanon demonstrates an effective approach in integrating SEL by using multiple entry points within the Lebanese education system. Based on the success of using the climate of the learning environment as an entry point for social and emotional learning during QITABI, the QITABI 2 team is planning to use all of the six SEL integration approaches identified in this report (see Table 4 for details).

- The QITABI 2 team is supported by MEHE-DOPS and CERD, who initiated and are leading the development of the core SEL framework, which prioritizes and defines social and emotional competence areas and skills to be promoted in Lebanon. Based on the finalized framework, morning meetings will include stand-alone, brief, focused SEL skills-building interventions. Lessons throughout the day will then reinforce these SEL interventions throughout the day, allowing further practice in Arabic, English, French, and math lessons. Teachers, teacher educators, and mentors will also be trained on school and classroom management strategies, active-learning pedagogical strategies to build positive and healthy relationships between learners and educators. Moreover, QITABI 2 will expand Parent Learning Circles (PLC), which was successfully piloted in QITABI, to reinforce SEL skills by providing facilitation tips and guidance to caregivers.

SUSTAINABILITY OF SEL PROGRAMMING[21]

The degree of sustainability of each project's SEL programming was most commonly discussed based on local and national governments' involvement in SEL activity design and implementation, as well as their adoption of SEL teaching and learning content upon completion of the activities. In addition, the research team examined the uptake of SEL interventions by family, community, and other local stakeholders, including community-based organizations (CBOs), as part of assessing the degree of sustainability. Activities further developed the capacity of various local organizations as implementing partners to be prepared for similar grant opportunities. Some key examples of ensuring sustainability were:

- Policy Adoption by National Governments

    – Based on the positive impact demonstrated during implementation, two entities responsible for alternative education and technical and vocational education adopted MYDev/Philippines's life skills training module to be implemented nationwide.

    – PRP/Pakistan built the capacity of local curriculum writers in developing SEL-themed reading instructional materials in local languages, orienting them on how to write for early-grade readers and the importance of SEL. The Pakistani government is also adopting PRP's model of continuous teacher professional development into its basic education programming in regions and at scale.

    > *"From day one, sustainability was part of the activities. But now, we can see that i) the PRP reading learning material is available on the government website and ii) all reading and learning material is now part of the public textbooks. So, at last, we see that our branch of the government is printing their textbooks." – Activity Staff, PRP, Pakistan*

    – The MoE in Honduras allocated resources for the expansion of ALE's PE curriculum with SEL focus in additional schools, and its CBT curriculum was also used by the Ministry in additional schools. In addition, capitalizing on a renewed interest in SBV prevention within the MoE and wider Government of Honduras, ALE influenced updating the National Strategy for Prevention, with a broader group of government agencies, donors, and community partners.

    – The successor of ECR/Nigeria—Addressing Education in Northeast Nigeria (AENN)—is working closely with the Nigerian Education Development and Research Council to adopt ECR's SEL-integrated NFE curriculum into the Federal-level Accelerated Education Program curriculum and to institutionalize it for national use to further strengthen policy-level sustainability. USAID's Global Development Lab is also supporting ECR's legacy, funding IRC in innovating the development process of SEL content. Taking lessons learned from the ECR, IRC piloted an extensive qualitative research with teachers and community members to better understand social and emotional skills valued and prioritized and also the local pedagogical examples to develop SEL lesson plans locally.

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[21] The sustainability section is written based on a question asked during the KIIs. The framing of the question used no particular definition or analytical framework of sustainability; instead, it was framed to understand the status of the impact of SEL interventions.

– LARA/Uganda is working closely with the MoESTS to integrate the Journeys Activity Handbooks as a mandatory extracurricular intervention at school. The team is now advocating to incorporate SEL concepts into Uganda's mainstream national curriculum.

- **Uptake of SEL Interventions by Community-Based Organizations, Local NGOs, or Local Private Partners**

  – MYDev/Philippines established and strengthened 11 Youth Development Alliances (YDA) to develop the capacity of learners themselves in mainstreaming of youth initiatives in local governance and community service. Learners were trained to better interact with others, resolve conflict in a positive way, develop self-confidence, and develop their sense of belonging by actively participating in such an alliance, and YDAs successfully contributed to increasing resources for youth training, post-training support for livelihood or employment, and continuous education opportunities.

  > *"One element that MYDev really put forward that actually we are using in other countries now is that we recognized that the existing youth voice groups were not representative of the marginalized out-of-school youth population. So we worked with local authorities, communities, and youth themselves to create those youth development alliances where youth were elected and sat with us—different stakeholders including private sector and municipality representatives—to really troubleshoot and understand the situation of out-of-school youth and how we can keep improving the different elements of MYDev. That was facilitated by these youth development coordinators coming from the communities themselves." – Activity Staff, MYDev, Philippines*

  – ECR/Nigeria formed community coalitions that identified appropriate and safe non-formal learning centers (NFLC) with competent facilitators from conflict-affected communities. By the time ECR was completed, community coalitions had mobilized their own resources and established an additional 21 centers to provide structured literacy, numeracy, and SEL lessons for displaced, crisis-affected learners.

  – ALE/Honduras engaged a diverse group of donors, NGOs, and local organizations to draft a national policy around school-based violence prevention.

  – EF/Honduras's informants emphasized the importance of building the capacity of local facilitators to gradually strengthen overall community capabilities. Most facilitators in EF's life skill component come from the same communities and share similar experiences with the youth beneficiaries. They often have a strong commitment to their community. By equipping the facilitators with the methodology and tools to implement life skill training services, EF also benefits facilitators own socio-emotional growth and creates an opportunity for them to operationalize and transfer the knowledge and skills they learned in the future.

Key Finding #8: Ensuring partnership with stakeholders across all levels of the education and related system, as well as local communities, is critical in strengthening sustainability of SEL interventions.

MYDev/Philippines demonstrated a strong sustainability plan for the activity across all levels of the education and related system. First, at the institutional level, MYDev's life skills training module was adopted by two entities responsible for alternative education and technical and vocational education, largely based on the positive impact through the year. The adoption occurred in phases and only in one region, but the positive impact resulted in national-level institutionalization of the curriculum. Second, MYDev established strong relationships with local Filipino NGOs or small-scale vocational training organizations as implementing partners throughout the course of the activity which enabled local organizations to build their capacity and be prepared for other, similar opportunities. Third, MYDev successfully built youth-led networks, such as YDAs, to sustain improved civic engagement skills and aspirations among youth, which is particularly unique among the reviewed youth workforce development activities.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS, CHAMPIONS, AND CRITICS OF SEL

Across all eight case studies, purposeful selection and involvement of diverse stakeholders was a critical component for effective SEL programming. In addition to active involvement of the target population, locally grounded, interdependent and multi-stakeholder partnership allows for successful activity implementation and, in some cases, sustainability and scalability as well. Through capacity-building efforts, and by transferring ownership of the activity to local stakeholders, some activities have equipped communities to independently and effectively sustain activity implementation beyond its operational period and geographic focus. Outlined below are some key stakeholder engagement strategies, organized by stakeholder group.

- Teachers and School Administration

  Five of the nine activities (ALE/Honduras, LARA/Uganda, PRP/Pakistan, QITABI/Lebanon, QITABI 2/Lebanon) focused on formal school-level programming to improve school climate, attendance, and retention. The school constitutes a complex educational ecosystem comprising various key actors, including teachers, principals or head teachers, students, parents, and government authorities. Keeping school at the center of the results framework, ALE/Honduras works in partnership with education systems in target Honduran municipalities to create a safe learning environment for students and empower schools to support community violence prevention efforts.

  For PRP/Pakistan, Teacher Inquiry Groups were developed to reinforce the PRP Continuous Professional Development model, which aimed to improve the instructional practices of teachers in teaching Urdu/Sindhi reading to grade 1 and 2 students. These groups brought together teachers from neighboring schools to meet at least monthly to discuss teaching experiences, share successes and challenges, learn the component skills of reading and assessment techniques in more detail, and understand how daily lessons were developed and why they are important for students' learning. In these groups, teachers received training on student well-being as part of IRC's Healing Classrooms Approach. Classroom-based coaching and teacher supervision reinforced teacher training on this approach and on other Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) teaching methods.

QITABI/Lebanon provided training for teachers and school staff on promoting SEL through child-friendly learning environments by establishing classroom rules and daily interactions between teachers and learners. Although Sisimpur/Bangladesh did not have a formalized focus on school-level programming, teachers were trained to conduct lessons with children using supplemental learning materials developed by Sisimpur. Islamic school teachers in Bangladesh were critical because they perceived SEL concepts to be in conflict with religious teachings. Consequently, teachers were initially hesitant to modify their traditional teaching curriculum to include SEL aspects and classroom interventions using Muppets.

- Family and Community

Across all activities, school-level programming was complemented by active involvement of parents, guardians, and community members. For example, although the school is central to achieving reduced SBV, both LARA/Uganda and ALE/Honduras purposely engaged parents and community members to support the creation and sustenance of an enabling and violence-free learning environment for students by promoting positive attitudes toward gender equality and balanced power relations. Similarly, employing a grassroots approach in Honduras, EF recruited facilitators directly from the target community who were well known among youth and demonstrated a strong commitment to driving community-level change. In Pakistan, PRP involved parents and caregivers through storytelling sessions designed to build their capacity to promote children's reading skills at home.

ECR/Nigeria also employed a strong community outreach. Activity staff conducted compound meetings with parents and caregivers to sensitize them on the importance of girls' education and encourage them to enroll their daughters at girls-only learning centers, which are conveniently located and reduce the risk of GBV. Community coalitions were instrumental in supporting the cadre of teachers, mobilizing the community through grassroots advocacy, and providing basic school supplies to students. Through discussions with community members and other local education stakeholders, these coalitions identified safe and appropriate learning spaces and nominated competent learning facilitators from crisis-affected communities to conduct lessons with out-of-school learners.

Sisimpur/Bangladesh's innovative and unique mass media platform was critical in reaching children and their families across Bangladesh, including those living in remote regions. By maximizing activity reach through a variety of messaging platforms, the activity ensured strong community outreach for greater impact. Sisimpur also developed and distributed original storybooks that parents and teachers use to reinforce messages that are delivered through audio-visual content.

> *"You can see almost all of the books that we produce have instructions for parents and teachers at the end of the storybook. Research shows that children's learning improves when parents read books to them. So, that is the reason, whatever we produce, regardless of audio-visual or print content, we always prefer that children use this content with the help of their parents." – Activity Staff, Sisimpur, Bangladesh*

While all activities strategically involved family and community members, key informants across several case studies underscored the need to strengthen parent engagement. Due to time and resource constraints, EF/Honduras was unable to fully engage parents and caregivers. This posed a significant challenge: although youth were exposed to SEL concepts through training activities, lack of parental support hindered implementation and sustainability of any behavioral changes at home. Key

informants believed this was in part due to the fact that parents were not made aware of the purpose of these youth trainings and therefore did not entirely recognize the importance of such behavior changes. This barrier was further compounded by stigmatized community-level perceptions of out-of-school youth viewed as violent, troublesome, and—essentially—a lost cause in the community. However, EF respondents noted that some families who were once critical are now champions of the activity and encourage their children to participate in EF.

> *"And, obviously, there is a part of society that completely rejects and can't accept this population. They say that they cannot change, that they have no chance to change—that they shouldn't have the chance to be treated well." – Activity Staff, EF, Honduras*

> *"The development of their soft skills improves employability and helps them to keep their jobs for months or years. It therefore allows their families to be happy. We are constantly doing follow-up on the youth, and we are very happy to hear their parents say encouraging statements like, 'I am happy; my son is working. He did not answer the follow-up call because he is working.' Their families in general show gratitude." – Activity Staff, EF, Honduras*

Similar to parent engagement challenges in EF/Honduras, LARA/Uganda's activity staff were unable to adequately engage parents as part of their community outreach efforts. It was particularly challenging to engage men who perceived child care and education as women's responsibility.

> *"We would have liked a broader community representation than we had. When we started that activity, we had community change agents trained, and they worked with some grantees that were local community development organizations that mobilized communities. And one of the challenges that they had in getting a large number of parents involved, and particularly men because the men here don't see child issues (like their education) as their realm of responsibility. They think that's really a woman's job. So we had, and they expected, community members expected facilitation. So they wanted to receive something to attend these discussions. They didn't feel that the parenting kind of discussions were necessarily important enough that they would come repeatedly." – Activity Staff, LARA, Uganda*

- Government Authorities and Education Experts

ECR/Nigeria conducted a formal curriculum design workshop to identify contextually relevant SEL concepts for curriculum and lesson plans. Workshop participants provided technical input and included national-level stakeholders such as representatives from the Nigerian Ministry of Education, a national curriculum agency, as well as college professors. As part of its programming, ECR also launched several NFE technical working groups, comprising diverse stakeholders including inter-ministerial representatives, State Universal Basic Education Board, State Agency for Mass Education, and other policymakers, who played a vital role in reviewing and approving the SEL curriculum, facilitators' manual and trainers' guide. In addition to conducting frequent consultations with teachers and trainers to identify and prioritize SEL competencies unique to the target population, ALE/Honduras collaborated with government and academic stakeholders to align activity content with the Honduran National Curriculum.

While some activities were designed to engage government stakeholders in certain aspects of the activity, others collaborated with the government along the continuum of the project. For example, starting from the inception phase and along the full course of the activity, LARA/Uganda leveraged

existing government structures and worked in close partnership with the Government of Uganda, especially the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Sports (MoESTS). Similarly, continuous engagement and capacity-building of government authorities across all aspects of the MYDev/Philippines activity (design, contextualization, implementation, and measurement) has enabled curriculum scale-up beyond the initial intervention areas. QITABI/Lebanon leveraged existing government structures by working with the MEHE to implement roll-out trainings for Arabic teachers in 260 schools, which have now been adopted as MEHE's training module and expanded to all public schools in Lebanon. Finally, Sisimpur/Bangladesh was also implemented in close conjunction with the Government of Bangladesh, which had a pivotal role in content development and approval, storybook distribution in government schools, and airing of thematic TV episodes.

> *"We work with the government in schools, and having their consent is very important. We cannot even distribute anything in these schools without their approval. So, before finalizing the content of story books, we send them to the government office for their review. Before distribution, we do an orientation session with government officials to explain how children can be benefited from these materials." – Activity Staff, Sisimpur, Bangladesh*

PRP/Pakistan also involved provincial and regional governments in every phase of the activity, which encouraged government buy-in, investment, and integration of PRP's learning content into the national curriculum of Pakistan. Moreover, building capacity, ownership, and consensus among government authorities was also crucial in ensuring PRP's sustainability beyond the life of the activity. Respondents did note, however, that activity staff encountered resistance from local stakeholders at the onset of the activity, largely in part due to cultural perceptions of reading instruction being traditionally treated as a subject rather than a foundation for cognitive development and learning. Government stakeholders in particular were identified as initial critics of the activity who challenged PRP's efforts to promote reading and include personal safety as a topic to be highlighted in learning materials.

- Local organizations (NGOs, private sector organizations, universities, *etc.*)

For some activities, community outreach efforts extended beyond parents and caregivers to also include local organizations. EF/Honduras relies on the network and expertise of local partner organizations that have prior experience working with the community and specific youth groups. Through its private sector engagement strategy, the activity collaborated with local businesses and representatives from human resources (HR) to understand the preferred qualifications and characteristics they look for while screening and evaluating potential job candidates.

Private sector representatives such as local businesses and institutional partners also worked in close conjunction with MYDev/Philippines to design and implement the program. However, informants identified that local universities could have been involved more effectively and systematically. Instead of engaging them as service providers, it is recommended to involve them in the development of the learning agenda. Similarly, given the activity's focus on mobilizing the community and eliminating deep-seated negative perceptions about out-of-school youth, informants noted that media engagement could have also been strengthened.

> *"So universities, they too can become key participants in youth development in their own locality so that the learnings, techniques, and information that they've learned from implementing the activity stays with them and hopefully is sustained well after the activity has ended. So, that's one key stakeholder that I think we could have engaged in a more effective fashion." – Activity Staff, MYDev, Philippines*

PRP/Pakistan engaged with foundations, NGOs, and other community partners to expand programming scope and increase the number of beneficiaries reached. Certain grants were provided to engage local NGOs in particular that were based on thematic areas such as Reading Events to Promote Parental Engagement and Reading for Adolescent Girls. PRP's key informants noted that activity implementation could be improved through engagement of some key NGOs, especially those working on child rights and disability.

> *"I would say, there are a couple of NGOs that were not included but they need to be included. Those who are working on SEL for child rights, for example. But, it depends sometimes, on whether our implementing partner invites them. So, we don't know more details why they could not participate in events, in implementation, and other services. But, there are a couple of organizations I think working on disability and child rights, they need to engage in that part." – Activity Staff, PRP, Pakistan*

Key Finding #9: **Obtaining support from local education authorities and school leadership, and providing continuous professional development opportunities, can strengthen educators' championing of new SEL approaches.**

Since SEL is a relatively new concept, many activities encountered some initial resistance from stakeholders who perceived the SEL approach as a deviation from traditional instructional methods, learner-educator relationships, and child-adult relationships. Therefore, key informants stressed the importance of fostering a locally grounded, interdependent and multi-stakeholder partnership to facilitate effective SEL implementation. Through continuous awareness-raising on new SEL approaches and sustained engagement opportunities throughout the implementation phase, key informants witnessed critics turn into strong advocates over time.

Educators were one of the most crucial stakeholders in implementing new SEL approaches across the focus activities. They were more likely to be champions of new SEL approaches if they received support from school administrative staff, local government authorities, as well as parents and caregivers. Key informants also highlighted the importance of providing sufficient training and continuous mentorship support on new SEL integration approaches.

For example, LARA/Uganda trained teachers, students, and school administration staff to identify, avoid, and report acts of SRGBV. However, activity staff shared that they initially encountered resistance from teachers who had deep-seated cultural beliefs and gender stereotypes that were in conflict with the new SEL-focused teaching instruction.

> *"The whole issue about Journeys and SEL is challenging authority of adults, culture, and leaders. So, at the start of it, you'll find that people are not as comfortable because you are now telling the adult to talk with a child rather than beating the child. But overall, there is a goodwill from that because people obey authority. So, if it comes from, like, the District Education Officer or if the headmaster supports it, then teachers will implement. When parents see the head teachers or the teachers talking to them about the positivity of it, they will also implement. So, everybody can actually be an advocate as long as he or she understands the logic behind it. The critic today can be an advocate tomorrow." – Activity Staff, LARA, Uganda*

MEASURING SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS AND ASSOCIATED OUTCOMES

Various measurement approaches were undertaken across eight activities. These have been categorized below based on the object of measurement. Note: QITABI 2/Lebanon is too early in its measurement design; therefore, it is excluded from this section.

- Measuring Individual-Level Social and Emotional Skills

  While the majority of activities provided explicit social and emotional skills instruction, only three of them explicitly measured changes of target skills. The three activities that measured changes in social and emotional skills of learners applied quasi-experimental or performance evaluation research designs. More specifically:

  – LARA/Uganda used a 25-item learner self-reported survey to assess the yearly gains of individual social and emotional skills' progression, corresponding to what was being fostered through the Journeys intervention in schools. The items focus on social and emotional skills in the competence areas of self-confidence, social awareness, and agency.

  – MYDev/Philippines used two self-reported survey tools—Youth Employment Survey (YES) and Youth Perceptions Survey (YPS)—to measure changes in soft skills of youth who completed the life skills training modules and subsequent technical trainings. To measure the skills that were promoted specific to MYDev, the team added a new section to measure youth's life skills, work readiness, and leadership skills.

  – ECR/Nigeria did not develop or adapt a measurement tool specific to its SEL interventions but used the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). More details can be found in the bullets below Key Finding 9.

- Measuring School Climate and Culture

  LARA/Uganda measured perceptions of school climate using two main factors: 1) general school climate construct defined by friendliness among pupils, and teachers' treatment of marginalized children and 2) students' perception of the fears around school-related violence and punishment. Students responded to two survey instruments, perceptions on school climate and perceptions on gender attitudes. Teachers and parents were also asked about their perceptions of school climate and gender attitudes.

- Measuring Changes in Teacher Instructional Practices

  Activities using this approach measured change in teachers' instructional practices as a consequence of being trained on teaching methodologies supporting learner's social and emotional skills development and child-friendly classroom environment. Structured classroom observation tools specific to teacher training modules and their expected practices were typically used to measure the change in practices. More specifically:

  – PRP/Pakistan used an observation tool as part of its randomized controlled evaluation design and compared the treatment groups' teaching practices with a control group.

– ECR/Nigeria used an observation tool with its performance evaluation approach and compared pre- and post-intervention data without a comparison group.

– QITABI/Lebanon used a teacher observation tool as a form of formative assessment.

- Assessing the Impact of SEL Interventions on Associated Outcomes

  The impact of SEL interventions on associated outcomes stated in the activities' theory of change were assessed. Typically, data were collected using qualitative methods (such as KII and FGDs) or a mixed-methods approach (using surveys in addition to the qualitative methods). More specifically:

  – ALE/Honduras conducted a rapid survey of 261 students, teachers, and principals from 30 schools. It focused on the perceived impact of PE lessons with SEL themes and skills building on teacher-student relationships, perceived school safety, and school drop-out rate.

  – EF/Honduras undertook a mixed-methods impact evaluation, using surveys, FGDs, and KIIs as data collection methods to understand the improved employment and livelihood opportunities and decreased engagement in violence using a self-reported employability perception after participating in the activity. The survey items included perceived life skills and job skills, including problem-solving skills, communication skills, interpersonal relations, and following instructions.

  – LARA/Uganda also plans to evaluate how progress on school climate, gender attitudes, and violence improves attendance and reading outcomes at the activity endline. However, the plan to assess the correlation between social and emotional skills and attendance and reading outcomes was not clearly mapped out at the time of this review.

Key Finding #10: **When possible, measuring social and emotional skills and associated outcomes with tools that are developed or adapted to the specific context and the activity design is desirable.**

Overall, key informants described measuring social and emotional skills and associated outcomes adequately as an important but challenging task—especially when time and resources were limited. Key informants across the activities described the need to use measurement tools specifically developed or adapted to the context and the activity design.

Activities using the explicit SEL skills instruction approach generally desired to measure changes in learner-level social and emotional skills fostered explicitly through each activity to understand SEL interventions' impact better. Although only three activities (MYDev/Philippines, LARA/Uganda, and ECR/Nigeria) attempted to measure individual social and emotional skills, key informants from other activities (Sisimpur/Bangladesh, EF/Honduras) also expressed their interest to do so if time and resource permits. Key informants from the activities measuring individual-level social and emotional skills shared some promising but limited evidence and lessons learned. Some specific examples are:

- MYDev/Philippines's two SEL measurement tools were developed or adapted specifically to the context. YES was developed and validated in previous EDC projects in the Philippines and then adapted for use in MYDev. The YPS tool was developed for MYDev and was validated before its use. Two of three impact evaluations showed that MYDev youth improved their life skills, work readiness, and leadership skills significantly more than comparison groups. Regarding the civic engagement outcome, the MYDev youth's perception towards their government and communities improved significantly at all three evaluations. To further triangulate the self-reported evidence, an evaluation team collected qualitative data with youth, training facilitators, employers, parents, and community leaders. The respondents perceived the MYDev youth as having stronger work habits, interpersonal skills, problem-solving, peaceful conflict resolution, and communication skills than other youth employees.

- LARA/Uganda's theory of change assumes that a positive, supportive and violence-free school climate will improve overall learning, retention and attendance, thus contributing to improved reading skills. After one year of implementing SEL interventions through individual skills instruction and school climate change activities, quantitative findings indicate that children in the treatment group demonstrated slightly more positive social and emotional competency than those in the control group. However, the effect size was too small for a meaningful interpretation. Qualitative findings with teachers and headteachers imply improved interpersonal interactions and pro-social behaviors among students, as well as increased trust in teachers. Teachers also reported that they perceived to have a better relationship with students, and they were less inclined to use corporal punishment.

- ECR/Nigeria used an already-translated and adapted SDQ in Nigeria, which was composed of predetermined items that did not consider the social and emotional skills fostered through the ECR's SEL activities. Evidence gathered using the SDQ tool showed little about any social and emotional outcomes change due to the SEL programming. The analysis of the data collected with the SDQ tool indicated that minimal change occurred or sometimes, even regression happened, which the ECR team attributes to the limitations of the tool. This was because such evidence contradicted other evidence gathered from teacher observation and focus group discussions with learners and learning facilitators. They reported significant changes in learners' psychosocial state and teacher-student and peer relationships. All respondents from ECR strongly voiced the importance of measurement tools developed or adapted to a specific context and an SEL intervention based on their lessons.

"The SDQ was a convenient tool. It was already available in Hausa. It was already average in English. We didn't have to do that translation. However, it wasn't contextualized. It's a diagnostic tool more than a measurement tool. So, the outcomes and skills were not necessarily specific or targeted enough to the skills we were targeting in the curriculum." – Activity Staff, ECR, Nigeria

Nevertheless, assessing social and emotional skills with context-specific measurement tools might not be feasible in some cases. Activities working through national governments' structures and regulations (*e.g.*, QITABI/Lebanon) found utilizing the existing school-level system with simple, formative assessment tools had generated more meaningful data than using rigorous, comprehensive measurement tools.

Key Finding #11: Measuring improved teaching practices with structured classroom observation tools can document positive impacts of SEL interventions.

There was some documented, promising evidence from structured classroom observations after providing instructional training opportunities for educators. PRP/Pakistan used a structured teacher classroom observation tool, which included measuring teachers' instructional practices that build a safe and child-friendly classroom environment, which is crucial in fostering learners' social and emotional skills. The observational tool was designed to rate the different instructions and classroom management practices observed by teachers, using a matrix of items using a five-point Likert scale). A subtask on "Promotion of student participation and well-being" was the most relevant to SEL outcomes. Seven items specifically captured teaching practices promoting student participation and well-being, such as creating an inclusive, participatory classroom culture for linguistically and culturally diverse students and supporting student well-being by employing positive discipline techniques that create a safe learning environment.

PRP/Pakistan was able to find an association between various teaching competencies and students' reading skills, using a quasi-experimental research design. Teachers' competency supporting students' participation and well-being showed the most influential association with students' oral reading fluency, for example—more than teachers' reading and writing competency. The team concluded the importance of building the capacity of teachers in learner-centered pedagogies and active, participatory pedagogies by creating a participatory and inclusive culture, promoting group work, helping students connect the lesson contents to their own background, and encouraging student-led projects in improving young learners' reading skills.

Similarly, with ECR/Nigeria, learning facilitators improved teaching practices from baseline to endline. This implies that potentially, the ECR's learning facilitator training was effective. Across the six assessed domains of learning facilitator practices, teaching methodology and SEL were assessed as the most successful. QITABI/Lebanon observed teachers' application of *"circle time with a SEL intervention where teachers encourage students to talk about their fears, and anxieties, and also provide them with good tools and strategies to manage their fear" – Activity Staff, QITABI, Lebanon.*

USAID'S SUPPORT IN SEL INTEGRATION INTO ACTIVITIES

Key informants discussed what kind and what level of support were provided to implementing partners and USAID Mission staff from USAID Headquarters (HQ) or USAID Missions in designing and implementing the SEL interventions. Interviewers subsequently asked what more could be done in terms of support from USAID HQ or other Missions to design and implement future SEL activities.

UNDERSTANDING CURRENT LEVEL OF SUPPORT FROM USAID

KII respondents expressed positive opinions of the support received from their respective Missions. ALE/Honduras and MYDev/Philippines highlighted the benefits of working with an education team that was highly informed about SEL implementation, with an ALE stakeholder indicating that the Honduras Mission was "excited to see SEL introduced formally in Honduras." Similarly, respondents from MYDev, PRP/Pakistan, and QITABI II/Lebanon underscored the benefit of working with the same USAID staff members over a length of time, noting how working consistently with the same people allowed for smooth collaboration in all aspects of their work, including SEL programming. They spoke in particular

of a strong relationship between activity staff and the Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR) in the execution of activity interventions. Those serving as AORs were often noted as being extremely familiar with local context, some having been local to the area of implementation or having worked in the country context for a long time. MYDev respondents in particular praised their AOR for leveraging knowledge of the Mindanao context to support activity implementation, strong commitment to rigorous SEL measurement practices, and disseminating activity findings on a larger scale.

While the nature of respondent relationships with USAID HQ varied due to the interviewees' roles and responsibilities, respondents from ALE/Honduras, QITABI II/Lebanon, PRP/Pakistan, and ECR/Nigeria noted that their relationship with USAID HQ was largely positive with respect to SEL programming. One ECR/Nigeria respondent credited a crucial role E3/Ed and the Africa bureau played in designing SEL programming.

KEY INFORMANT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE USAID SUPPORT FOR SEL INTEGRATION INTO ACTIVITIES

What follows are key informants' suggestions grouped into broader themes of SEL design and contextualization, implementation, measurement, and capitalizing on lessons learned.

- Design and Contextualization

  KII respondents across six activities proposed different support required from USAID to design their respective SEL interventions. One LARA/Uganda respondent expressed a desire to make a more direct and discernable linkage between academic and social development. Another LARA stakeholder requested additional teacher training with the intent of helping teachers develop their own social and emotional intelligence competencies and, consequently, better support learners in their development. A QITABI 2/Lebanon stakeholder recommended greater focus on both implicit and explicit integration of SEL supplementary reading materials used during language lessons.

  Respondents from ECR/Nigeria and Sisimpur/Bangladesh expressed a desire for USAID to support with increasing the scale, detail, and scope of interventions. An ECR/Nigeria respondent noted that the Healing Classroom concept should be taken to scale at all USAID education activities and that related materials should be institutionalized as part of teacher training. A Sisimpur stakeholder indicated that USAID support is needed to improve production quality of future TV episodes by making the SEL-related topics discussed in the programming more explicit, comprehensive, and engaging for young viewers. This was viewed as particularly important for developing and delivering messages on sensitive content such as child marriage, child safety, and natural disasters in the Bangladeshi context.

- Implementation

  Youth workforce development activities sometimes used distinct phases and implementing agencies in providing life skills training and technical skills training. Key informants from EF/Honduras found the fragmented approach not effective and an integrated approach across the life span of the activity more effective. According to one of the respondents, the activity initially had a variety of different implementers providing life skills and other technical training components of the activity. However, it was found that the multitude of implementing partners prevented youth from identifying with the

organizations, and communication between partners proved to be a challenge. In response to this difficulty, service delivery was streamlined so that youth were taught life skills and provided different types of interventions through only one organization. The respondent noted that youth now feel more connected with the organization and programming and that they receive more attention than they had previously, thus contributing to low activity dropout levels.

Stakeholders from QITABI 2/Lebanon and ECR/Nigeria expressed a desire for additional flexibility in the timeline from USAID to allow for the preliminary work required to successfully prepare for SEL implementation. In Lebanon, one QITABI 2 respondent noted that they faced a particular challenge with conducting groundwork due to the fact that SEL programming is new to Lebanon's education system and had not been formally introduced into curriculum materials. Similarly, in Nigeria, ECR stakeholders also desired more flexibility in activity design in order to include innovative programming such as SEL.

- Measurement

  Respondents across QITABI 2I/Lebanon, Sisimpur/Bangladesh, and MYDev/Philippines suggested changes to current measurement approaches to accurately capture activities' impact on SEL outcomes. Stakeholders from QITABI 2 and Sisimpur suggested having more SEL-specific indicators, with the respondent from QITABI 2 emphasizing a need for such indicators across USAID projects dealing with SEL. MYDev stakeholders also noted that current measurement approaches could be altered to capture a greater range of SEL-related outcomes and noted in particular that the activity management evaluation component could have been fortified. Sisimpur's current measurement plan does not account for formal evaluations that take into consideration SEL-specific outcomes. Given this limitation, an activity respondent emphasized the importance of having USAID support to develop and integrate tools in order to rigorously and periodically measure changes in SEL skills among learners and school-level outcomes. Informants also highlighted the need for additional funding to support thorough and end-to-end research, starting with a needs assessment at the beginning of the study and ending with a project evaluation.

  > *"So, I do think this is an opportunity to really underscore the importance of evaluation so that we can really continue to make sure that we're getting the messaging right. And I think being able to ensure that grants include a research component, which is not just important for the donor to know that it was a worthwhile investment but also really for the grantee, for the implementer, to make sure that we know that we're doing things as well as we can." – Activity Staff, Sisimpur, Bangladesh*

- Capitalizing on Lessons Learned and Advocacy

  Stakeholders across four case studies (PRP/Pakistan, QITABI 2/Lebanon, ECR/Nigeria, and ALE/Honduras) emphasized a desire to share and learn from best SEL practices and lessons learned on a larger scale. A PRP stakeholder noted the lack of SEL knowledge among NGOs, donors, and government stakeholders in Pakistan and believed that sharing best practices with the USAID Mission and government stakeholders would be beneficial for raising awareness and advocating for SEL programming. QITABI 2 and ECR respondents indicated their desire to learn from SEL findings shared in a global conference setting and stressed that such gatherings are crucial for capacity-building of local implementers. One ALE stakeholder expressed interest in accessing information from other global SEL activities through an online database format.

> *"USAID is probably hosting many social-emotional learning activities or activities of that sort around the world. We don't necessarily have access to them to see them, learn and borrow from them, and to widen the perspective of what we are developing. So, perhaps it would be nice to have access to databases or to be able to access documents of other activities similar to ours that are being implemented in the world." – Activity Staff, ALE, Honduras*

One USAID Mission staff perceived more robust involvement and advocacy from USAID HQ as advantageous and necessary in supporting innovative education in emergencies programming, such as SEL. The respondent found USAID's recent policy direction toward empowering the Missions and minimizing HQ's role would instead defund education than other sectors, and more traditional and tangible education interventions (*e.g.*, distribution of tablets for ICT education) over a new initiative like SEL.

At a more grassroots level, ALE/Honduras stakeholders suggested consolidating current and future SEL programming within the Honduran context so that a single objective was clearly identifiable, and methodologies were well coordinated.

Key Finding #12: In-country implementing partners and USAID Mission staff suggest more resources and flexibility in designing, implementing, and measuring future SEL activities.

Across the activities, key informants expressed a desire for more resources throughout the SEL design phase, implementation, and measurement. Key informants were eager to learn and share best practices with in-country stakeholders as well as with global SEL practitioners. USAID Mission staff and implementing partners described a crucial role USAID HQ played in having SEL as a programming priority at the inception and activity design.

An ECR respondent expressed appreciation for the role that both Mission and HQ staff played in supporting the incorporation of the SEL into the activity design and suggested a similar support for future SEL activities.

> *"What I really appreciated was that USAID Mission contact allowed us the space and had confidence in us in doing good technical work. I think that his risk-taking tolerance to do new things, and USAID's headquarters that helped to design that program, being open and willing to look for innovative solutions to this new problem in Northeast Nigeria., I think that was the biggest thing that USAID could have done." – Activity Staff, ECR, Nigeria*

Stakeholders also proposed some additional flexibility in timeline across the activity's program cycle, especially at the design phase, to ensure the necessary contextualization of SEL competence areas and skills, teaching and learning content, and measurement tools can take place.

> *"We all want to see change very fast, but it's very, very difficult. Because I think it's quite unique, it's just giving it time and allowing the time, there should be more– It's not something that's done as quickly as putting math content together, or, I mean, those are things that have been done for years and years and years. For us, what's really challenging in Lebanon is that SEL has never been a part of the educational–it has never been a part of the curriculum or anything like that. There isn't this mindset that SEL is important. So, you're working on the ground on something that's very, very challenging. So, the expectations in terms of anything that's being done SEL-related needs to just account for time." – Activity Staff, QITABI 2, Lebanon*

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and recommendations made by the key informants and evaluation reports across the activities, the research team makes the following recommendations for USAID Mission-based staff, partners, USAID Center for Education, and donor groups to support the integration of SEL into basic education activities, through pre-primary, primary, secondary, and youth workforce development activities: [22]

SEL DESIGN PHASE

- In defining SEL and related terms during activity design, ensure discussion with in-country stakeholders to develop contextually appropriate and relevant terminology to facilitate smooth implementation of SEL interventions (see *e.g.*, ECR/Nigeria in Key Finding #1).

- The theory of change should include a description of the role of SEL based on the specific needs identified by the school and community (see *e.g.*, ALE/Honduras and MYDev/Philippines in Key Finding #2).

SEL CONTEXTUALIZATION

- Base SEL activity design, implementation, and evaluation on the understanding that social and emotional competence areas and skills may include those that are universal as well as those that are culturally and contextually specific. In developing a SEL framework, if feasible, undertake a ground-up approach and develop a locally driven SEL framework (see *e.g.*, QITABI 2/Lebanon in Key Finding #3).

- Use a global SEL framework in a contextually and culturally appropriate manner when a ground-up, locally driven SEL framework is not feasible (see *e.g.*, LARA/Uganda in Key Finding #4).

- In contextualizing SEL in teaching and learning materials, rigorously and iteratively pilot test SEL lesson plans and teacher training curricula with learners and educators, if feasible (see *e.g.*, Sisimpur/Bangladesh in Key Finding #5).

SEL FOR EQUITY AND INCLUSION

- Purposefully design SEL interventions to systematically build learners' agency to challenge existing inequities and to foster inclusive school climate to advance the goal of inclusion and equity in school and community environment (see *e.g.*, ALE/Honduras and LARA/Uganda in Key Finding #6).

SEL INTEGRATION INTO ACTIVITIES

- Ensure that SEL is integrated using multiple approaches and beyond the classroom context. The integration shall be in and of itself a long-term education goal and conducted system-wide (see *e.g.*, QITABI 2/Lebanon in Key Finding #7).

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[22] See "Program Quality Principles" in USAID (2019). Many of the recommendations based on the findings from the nine focus activities are included in the principles.

- Provide sequenced, active, focused, and explicit SEL instructions during regular learning hours. When appropriate, consider using age-appropriate and learning through play methodologies that meaningfully engage learners, promote social interaction, and are joyful.

- Teachers and school staff require continuous and regular professional development opportunities to cultivate their own social and emotional competencies and design innovative pedagogical practices for students.

- Integrating SEL through school curriculum and climate is an effective approach for practicing and reinforcing social and emotional skills.

- Ensure parents and caregivers are empowered to support their children's social and emotional development to align with school-wide goals.

- Policy adoption by national institutions: Consider agreement on the extent of SEL institutionalization with the Ministry of Education and any other relevant ministries to be purposeful from the beginning, and let the ministries take the lead.

- Involve stakeholders across all levels of the education system, including national and local ministries, local and community-based organizations, and families and youth or community-based organizations from the very beginning of the SEL activity design to ensure sustainability of SEL programming (see *e.g.*, MYDev/Philippines in Key Finding #8).

SEL KEY STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- Obtain support from local education authorities and school leadership, and provide continuous professional development opportunities to strengthen educators' acceptance of new SEL approaches (see *e.g.*, LARA/Uganda in Key Finding #9).

SEL SKILLS AND ASSOCIATED OUTCOMES MEASUREMENT

- When possible, assess individual social and emotional skills that were fostered through the SEL interventions. Use tools that are developed or adapted to the specific context (see *e.g.*, MYDev/Philippines and LARA/Uganda in Key Finding #10).

- Consider utilizing structured classroom observations tools when providing SEL instructional training opportunities for teachers (see *e.g.*, PRP/Pakistan in Key Finding #11).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE USAID SUPPORT

- Reconsider USAID HQ's role in advocating for innovative education programming. Ensure context-specific resources and support to implementing partners based on their needs throughout the program cycle to ensure effective SEL activities. Additional flexibility during the design phase can allow more contextually relevant and locally driven SEL design, implementation, and measurement. Such flexibility may further contribute to the sustainability and institutionalization of SEL (see *e.g.*, ECR/Nigeria and QITABI 2/Lebanon in Key Finding #12).

CONCLUSION

There is an increasing need and interest to integrate SEL into basic education activities at all levels, with the goal of quality learning and enhanced well-being, both in conflict and crisis-affected settings, as well as stable, low-resource contexts. Within this context, activities must keep in mind that designing and contextualizing SEL activities and interventions requires special attention because social and emotional competencies and skills are contextually and culturally specific (even more so than academic skills). Moreover, additional efforts are needed to address, in a timely manner, the ongoing challenges in implementing SEL activities, in addition to the challenges in deciding what social and emotional skills to measure and how.

ANNEX A: SOURCES OF INFORMATION

ANNEX A1.   LIST OF PROGRAM DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

PROJECT	NAME OF DOCUMENT	YEAR OF PUBLICATION
ALE	USAID School-based Violence Prevention Activity (SBVPA) Year 1 Work Plan	2017
	Honduras *Asegurando la Educación* Activity Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (MELP)	2018
	USAID School-based Violence Prevention Activity (SBVPA) Year 2 Work Plan	2018
	Summary of ALE Activities	2019
	Honduras *Asegurando la Educación* Activity Revised Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (MELP)	2019
	Aprendizaje Socioemocional Modulo III (Docentes por la Paz)	2019
	Guion Metodológico para la Facilitación del Módulo III (Docentes por la Paz) 2.0	2019
	USAID School-based Violence Prevention Activity (SBVPA) FY2019 Annual Report	2019
	Social Emotional Learning Program (PASE) Program Brief	2020
	En Positivo Resumen de Programa	2020
	PASE Manual de Facilitación Escolar 2.0	2020
	En Positivo Manual de Facilitación	2020
	M&E Tool En Positivo HMC Orientadores	2020
	M&E Tool En Positivo HMC Estudiantes	2020
	USAID School-based Violence Prevention Activity (SBVPA) Q2 FY2020 Quarterly Report	2020
ECR	Rolling Community Education and Conflict Assessment	2015
	Community Education and Conflict Assessment	2015

PROJECT	NAME OF DOCUMENT	YEAR OF PUBLICATION
	Rapid Situational Analysis in Borno State	2015
	Yobe Community Education and Conflict Assessment	2015
	Secondary Data Form (Tool #1)	2015
	Focus Group Discussion Guide—Teachers (Tool #2)	2015
	Focus Group Discussion Guide—Parents (Tool #2)	2015
	Focus Group Discussion Guide—Children (Tool #2)	2015
	In-depth Interview Guide (Tool #3)	2015
	Rapid Situational Analysis in Yobe State	2015
	Learning Assessment Endline Report	2015
	Year 1 Annual Report	2015
	Community Education and Conflict Assessment	2016
	Year 3 Baseline Assessment Report	2016
	Trainer's Guide—Reading, Numeracy, SEL	2016
	Learning Assessment Year 2 Baseline Report	2016
	Facilitator's Guide—Reading, Numeracy, SEL	2016
	Year 2 Endline Assessment Report	2016
	Enhanced Non-Formal Education Curriculum for Basic Literacy—Scheme of Work	2016
	Enhanced Non-Formal Education Curriculum for Basic Literacy	2016
	Meeting Learning Needs in Crisis-Affected Northeast Nigeria	2017

PROJECT	NAME OF DOCUMENT	YEAR OF PUBLICATION
	Year 3 Endline Assessment Report	2017
	Year 3 Annual Report	2017
	Community Education and Conflict Assessment—Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe & Yobe	2017
	Final Progress Report	2018
EF	Honduras Workforce Development Activity Revised Annual & Life of Project Work Plan	2016
	Honduras Workforce Development Activity Gender Analysis	2016
	Empleando Futuros Baseline Report	2017
	Habilidades para la Vida Manual para Participantes	2017
	Empleando Futuros Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan	2017
	Empleando Futuros Annual Report (Oct 2016–Sept 2017)	2017
	Empleando Futuros Pilot Impact Evaluation Phase I: Findings and Recommendations	2018
	Empleando Futuros Annual Report (Oct 2017–Sept 2018)	2018
	Honduras Labor Market Study	2018
	Development and Validation of the Violence-Involved Persons Risk Assessment (VIP-RA) Validation Report	2018
	The Results of *Empleando Futuros* on the Risk of Violence and Its Protective Factors	2019
	Performance Evaluation: Honduras Workforce Development Activity	2019
	Empleando Futuros Annual Report (Oct 2018–Sept 2019)	2019
	Variety of infographics and success stories on the website https://banyanglobal.com/project/honduras-workforce-development-activity/	NA

PROJECT	NAME OF DOCUMENT	YEAR OF PUBLICATION
LARA	Evaluation Design Overall Activity Work Plan	2016
	Midterm Impact and Final Performance Evaluation Report	2020
	Journeys for Pupils, RTI International	2017
	Journeys for Communities, RTI International	2017
	Journeys for Teachers, RTI International	2017
	LARA Activity Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan (AMELP)	2016
	SRGBV Rapid Formative Assessment Report	2016
	Year 3 Annual Report/Year 4 Work Plan	2019
	Final Baseline Report	2017
	SRGBV Longitudinal Study—Occasion 2	2020
	Year 2 Annual Report/Year 3 Work Plan	2018
MYDev	Increasing Youths' Resilience to Violence EDC OH Report Final	2019
	MYDEV Program FY16 Impact Evaluation Report	2017
	MYDEV Program FY15 Impact Evaluation Report	2016
	USAID's MYDev Program Final Report 2013–2019	2019
	Annual Report 2013–2014	2014
	Annual Report 2015–2016	2016
	Annual Report 2016–2017	2017
	Annual Report 2017–2018	2018

PROJECT	NAME OF DOCUMENT	YEAR OF PUBLICATION
	FY17 IE Report and FY 18–19 PE Report	2019
	MYDev Social Network Analysis Report	2019
	MYDev MEL Plan	2018
PRP	PRP MEL Plan	2020
	PRP Program Description	2019
	PRP Annual Report 2014–2015	2015
	PRP Annual Report 2015–2016	2016
	PRP Annual Report 2016–2017	2017
	PRP Annual Report 2017–2018	2018
	PRP Annual Report 2018–2019	2019
	A National Study of Gender Gaps and Opportunities in Pakistan	2017
	Batch 2 Impact Evaluation Study	2020
	TIG Module 10-Student Wellbeing	NA
	PRP Work Plan: Oct 2015–Sept 2016	2015
	PRP Work Plan: 2016–2017	2016
	PRP Work Plan: 2017–2018	2017
	PRP Work Plan: Oct 2018–Sept 2019	2018
	PRP Work Plan: July 2019–June 2020	2019
	2017 Early Grade Reading Assessment	2018

PROJECT	NAME OF DOCUMENT	YEAR OF PUBLICATION
	Early Grade Reading Assessment Urdu Endline Study	2017
	Sindhi Endline Report	2018
	PRP Variation Study Endline Report	2020
	Reading learning material for children (various stories)	NA
QITABI	QITABI-LSPO Career Education and Guidance Program	2019
	Gender Analysis of Basic Public Education in Lebanon	2017
	Gender Analysis of Higher Education in Lebanon	2017
	Gender Analysis of Technical and Vocational Training in Lebanon	2017
	QITABI Midterm Performance Evaluation	2017
	Child Friendly Schools (CFS-Forms) for Piloting English	NA
	QITABI Final Programmatic Report (Sep 2014–Feb 2020)	2020
	QITABI 2 Project Description	2019
	EWS Report EGR/BLA Approach	2019
	QITABI 2 SEL Technique Integration Guides: For Social-Emotional Learning in Language Instruction	2020
	Description of the SEL Program under QITABI 2	2020
	QITABI 2 Guiding Criteria for Selecting SEL-Enhancing Resources	2020

PROJECT	NAME OF DOCUMENT	YEAR OF PUBLICATION
Sisimpur	Statement of Educational Objectives for Sisimpur (Season 4)	2007
	Implementation of the Dream, Save, Do Project in Bangladesh: A Qualitative Study Report	2018
	Formative Research Report on Sisimpur Episode Season 11 and 12—Sesame Workshop Bangladesh	2018
	Formative Research on Sisimpur Storybooks	2019
	Formative Research on Sisimpur Storybook (Phase-II)	2020
	Sisimpur Annual Work Plan (Year 1: Dec '17–Sep '18)	2018
	Sisimpur Annual Work Plan (Year 2: Oct '18–Sep '19)	2018
	Statement of Educational Objectives (Season 6)	2009
	Sisimpur Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Plan	2018

ANNEX B: SEL THEORY OF CHANGE

ANNEX B1. SEL AND THEORY OF CHANGE

	SEL/SOFT SKILLS–RELATED IMMEDIATE RESULTS/INTERVENTIONS	MEDIUM-TERM OUTCOMES	LONG-TERM OUTCOMES
Direct reference to SEL/Soft skills			
ALE	IR4. Student attendance and retention in those schools will improve, and students will develop the skills and coping mechanisms to deal with risk factors related to violence inside and outside of schools	- Addressing of school-based violence that impedes the delivery of education and its goals to access, retention, and learning and use of education and school processes to contribute to violence prevention in target communities	- Resilience of communities and individuals to crime increased - Quality of services that protect against violence increased
ECR	Sub-IR 1.2 Integrate accelerated learning programs for core academic subjects, life skills, and SEL services into non-formal education (NFE) and alternative learning programs	- Increased availability of quality, protective and relevant NFE and alternative education opportunities	- Expansion of access to quality, protective, and relevant NFE and alternative education opportunities for out-of-school children
EF	At-risk youth who are provided with high-quality, comprehensive, and market-driven vocational training services and assistance (life skills, basic competencies, psycho-social support, technical skills and job placement support)	- Increased employment and reduction of their risk factors	- Increase of household incomes - Reduction in incidence of being victims or perpetrators of violence and crime
LARA	IR 2.2. Schools strengthened to provide a positive and supportive school climate for learning (school average on pupils' perception of school climate and pupils' attitudes about gender equality)	- Improved retention	- Improved reading skills
MYDev	Improved life skills, work readiness, and leadership skills for civic engagement	- Improved employment/livelihood opportunities - Increased civic engagement	- Improvement of peace and stability in Mindanao
QITABI 2	Outcome 2: Improved social and emotional learning	- Improvement of the provision of educational services, specifically in reading, math, writing, and SEL skills of girls and boys in Lebanon	- Building the Lebanese education system's institutional capacity for sustainability and self-reliance
Sisimpur	Critical thinking, decision-making, turn-taking, conflict resolution, empathy, sympathy, emotional regulation, respect, cooperation, gratitude, *etc.*	None	- Enhanced early grade reading and select life skills of Bangladeshi children ages 3–8 through Sisimpur initiatives

	SEL/SOFT SKILLS–RELATED IMMEDIATE RESULTS/INTERVENTIONS	MEDIUM-TERM OUTCOMES	LONG-TERM OUTCOMES
No direct reference to SEL but implicitly assumed			
QITABI	School personnel trained to develop child-friendly school environment and expand access to quality education	- Expanded access to safe and relevant education for vulnerable public school students	- Improved reading skills and equitable access in conflict environments
PRP	IR 1.1. Improved classroom learning environment for reading	None	- Improved reading skills for Grade 1 and 2 children

ANNEX C: SEL MEASUREMENT APPROACHES

ANNEX C1. SEL MEASUREMENT APPROACHES

ACTIVITY	STUDY DESIGN	INSTRUMENT/ TOOL	SEL COMPETENCE AREAS AND SKILLS MEASURED	PURPOSE OF THE MEASUREMENT	TYPE OF INSTRUMENT	RESPONDENTS
LARA/ Uganda	Quasi-experimental design with repeated measures (baseline and three additional occasions)	Perception of school climate survey	-Inclusion -Peer relations -Teacher-student relations -Safety -Attitudes toward corporal punishment	- To evaluate the success of the Journeys intervention in improving school climate	Self-report survey	Students and school staff (including teachers)
		Gender Attitudes Survey	-Gender traits -Gender norms -Gender roles -Report of corporal punishment	- To evaluate the success of the Journeys interventions in shifting gender attitudes toward more gender equality	Self-report survey	Students and school staff (including teachers)
		Student SEL Survey	-Peer relations -Teacher-student relations -Understanding emotions -Sense of self and agency -Social awareness -Relationship skills	- To evaluate the success of the Journeys interventions in strengthening students' SEL	Self-report survey	Students
		SRGBV Experiences Survey	-Bullying -Corporal punishment -Sexual violence	- To evaluate the success of the Journeys interventions in reducing prevalence and extent that pupils experience bullying, corporal punishment, and sexual violence	Self-report Likert scale survey	Students

ACTIVITY	STUDY DESIGN	INSTRUMENT/ TOOL	SEL COMPETENCE AREAS AND SKILLS MEASURED	PURPOSE OF THE MEASUREMENT	TYPE OF INSTRUMENT	RESPONDENTS
MYDev/ Philippines	Quasi-experimental design (baseline and endline with randomly selected sample)	Youth Employment Survey (YES)	-Communication skills -Problem solving and critical thinking -Work habits and entrepreneurship -Leadership -Perception on gender roles in workplace	- To evaluate skill-focused training in improving youths' life skills, leadership skills, and work-readiness skills, and their perception on gender equity in workplace	Self-report Likert scale survey	Youth
		Youth Perceptions Survey (YPS)	-Perceptions on government -Perceptions on community -Personal resilience skills -Perception on violent extremism	- To evaluate skills-focused training in improving youths' civic engagement skills, perceptions of violent extremism, and resilience skills	Self-report Likert scale survey	Youth
ECR/ Nigeria	Performance evaluation without a comparison group (measured at baseline and endline with randomly selected sample)	Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) for learners	-Emotional symptoms -Conduct problems -Hyperactivity/inattention -Peer problems -Prosocial behavior	- To evaluate learners' social and emotional skills changes over time	Self-report survey	Learners
		Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) for learning facilitators			Survey on learner, reported by facilitators	Learning facilitators
		Classroom observation	-General teaching practice -instructional content -Classroom interventions -Assessment -Social and emotional environment -School recordkeeping	- To evaluate learning facilitators' teaching and classroom management practices	A structured classroom observation tool recorded by trained assessors	Learning facilitators

ACTIVITY	STUDY DESIGN	INSTRUMENT/ TOOL	SEL COMPETENCE AREAS AND SKILLS MEASURED	PURPOSE OF THE MEASUREMENT	TYPE OF INSTRUMENT	RESPONDENTS
ALE/ Honduras	Ongoing activity monitoring (screening tool)	Youth Service Eligibility Tool (YSET)	-Nine risk factors at a family-, peer- and individual-level domain	- To identify students qualified for secondary prevention service (psycho-emotional therapy)	Screening questionnaire tool assessing students' behaviors	Learners
		Change Measurement Tool (HMC)	-Anti-social behavior -Impulse control -Blame neutralization	- To measure students' behavior change	Screening questionnaire tool assessing students' behaviors	Learners
EF/ Honduras	Mixed-methods, RCT design (baseline and performance evaluation)	Youth Service Eligibility Tool (YSET)	-Financial management -Problem-solving skills -Basic mathematics problems -Job application skills -Communicating effectively with employers -Computer skills	- To measure the improvement of self-perception of employability	Self-report survey	Youth
		Violence-Involved Persons Risk Assessment (VIP-RA)	-Personal history -Emotional dimensions -Relationship/community dimensions -Past deviance	- To assess the level of risk that youth face at different stages of implementation	Self-report survey	Youth
Sisimpur/ Bangladesh	No impact evaluation but formative research on new TV episodes and storybooks	Interview questionnaire (per grade level from preschool to grade 3)	-Perception on the story -Perception on the illustration -Comprehension questions about the story	- To measure the effectiveness of sample of new contents/storybooks	Assessor-administered interview questionnaires	Children
		Focus group discussion (FGD) tool	-Appropriateness of the book -Perception on the contents taught through storybooks or TV episodes	- To measure the effectiveness of sample of new contents/storybooks - To get recommendations from teachers and parents	Facilitators-led tool	Parents and teachers

ACTIVITY	STUDY DESIGN	INSTRUMENT/ TOOL	SEL COMPETENCE AREAS AND SKILLS MEASURED	PURPOSE OF THE MEASUREMENT	TYPE OF INSTRUMENT	RESPONDENTS
QITABI/ Lebanon	Ongoing activity monitoring	Early warning indicators: Identifying struggling readers in grades 1 to 4	-Students' social interaction in school -Students' behavior in classroom -School attendance -Participation in extracurricular interventions -Academic performance in math, science and foreign language	- To assess the impact of QITABI's EWS intervention for struggling readers - To understand correlation between reading performance and other school indicators, including school absenteeism, classroom behavior, extracurricular interventions, and social interaction	Teacher-administered tool	Students
	Ongoing activity monitoring	Classroom observation tool adapted from Danielson's Framework for Teaching	-Planning and preparation -Classroom environment -Teaching -Professional responsibilities	- To share feedback on teachers' teaching practices after receiving the EGR-BLA training in the four domains, twice per academic year	MEHE-DOPS teacher-mentors administered structured observation tool	Teachers
PRP/ Pakistan	RCT design (baseline and performance evaluation)	Classroom observation tool	-Daily reading lesson plan -Teaching methods and resources -Promotion of student participation and well-being -Formative assessments -Teaching reading and writing	- To identify relationship between teachers' teaching practices and students' reading skills	Trained enumerators administered structured observation tool	Teachers

ANNEX D: REFERENCES

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