
TOOL 3.4

IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING LEARNERS' PROTECTION, MENTAL HEALTH, AND PSYCHOSOCIAL NEEDS



USERS

Educators and administrators;
Implementers; Educator
trainers



PURPOSE

To plan and make decisions about how to address
protection, mental health, and psychosocial needs
during the return to learning



ENGAGE

Local education officials; Learners (children and
youth), families, and communities; Child protection
actors and social workers; Health actors; Curriculum
and instruction specialists; Child development and
learning specialists

INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Review the Protection, Mental Health, and Psychosocial Impacts and Strategies Matrix (below).**
2. **Identify the protection, mental health, and psychosocial impacts and needs of learners.** Identifying such needs can be done through qualitative needs assessments in the form of conversations, focus group discussions, observations, or surveys. Ask learners, their families, educators, and community leaders how the crisis has affected and continues to affect their personal sense of well-being, social interactions, emotional state, and issues of protection. Ask these stakeholders what their most important needs are. Recall that in [Tool 1.1](#) you identified many child protection and social-emotional needs that may prevent learners from re-engaging in education. Remember, protection, mental health, and psychosocial needs will change over time. Any needs assessments, whether formal or informal, should be conducted on a rolling basis to identify new or evolving areas of need.

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INSTRUCTIONS (CONT.)

Guiding questions to assess protection, mental health, and psychosocial needs:

- **Child Protection:** What risks have children and youth faced due to the crisis? Has child marriage, teen pregnancy, child labor, domestic violence, or other protection issues increased? How will these risks affect learners' ability to return to education?
 - **Mental health:** How has the crisis directly affected the mental health of the learners? How has the crisis indirectly affected the mental health of learners (e.g., due to the crisis, children experienced greater domestic violence, leading to greater distrust in previously trusted adults)? What (new) stressors are learners experiencing?
 - **Readjust back to school:** How will new school structures and protocols affect learners mentally and emotionally? What new challenges will learners face? What routines or skills will learners need to recover?
 - **Thrive academically:** How has the crisis affected learners' feelings toward learning or academics? What new challenges are learners facing academically? How are these new challenges affecting learners' emotional states?
 - **Recover social skills:** What social skills will learners need to recover as they return to school? How will these skills look different due to the crisis?
 - **Equity:** How has the crisis differentially affected girls and boys, learners with and without disabilities, rural and urban populations, younger and older children/youth, religious and ethnic minorities, displaced populations, etc.?
3. **List the protection, mental health, and psychosocial impacts** identified in the needs assessment in Box 2. Indicate if certain sub-groups (e.g., girls, learners with disabilities, displaced learners) are specifically affected or more susceptible to particular risks. Impacts may need to be prioritized based on prevalence, frequency, or degree.
 4. Using the identified child protection, mental health, and psychosocial impacts as a guide, **identify objectives for your education program**. Take care to follow the Do No Harm imperative, referring learners to child protection and mental health professionals when needed. List objectives for child protection, mental health, and psychosocial support in Box 3.
 5. **Plan to address protection, mental health, and psychosocial needs** in the classroom or learning space, through schoolwide policies and practices, and by involving peers, caregivers, and communities. Some strategies may be more appropriate/effective for some groups than for others—as needed, specify the target group of certain strategies.

Be cautious when using or developing measures for protection and psychosocial needs. A universal measure does not exist, and linguistic and cultural adaptation will be required.

The [INEE landscape review](#) on SEL and PSS measures for education in emergencies provides a range of tools for holistic measurement of social and emotional and psychosocial wellbeing.

The [INEE Measurement Library](#) provides a number of tools for holistic measurement of children and youth's learning and development validated for contexts in the Middle East.

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INSTRUCTIONS (CONT.)

- a. Indicate strategies or practices to integrate in every classroom or learning space. Consider how these strategies could be adapted for distance learning should educational institutions be required to close again. Ensure that both in-person and distance learning practices engage all learners, including those with disabilities and those who lack access to technology. Record classroom-level strategies you will use in Box 4A.
 - b. Indicate strategies or practices that will be used schoolwide or across the educational institution, by all learners, educators, and administrators. Consider how these strategies could be adapted for distance learning should educational institutions be required to close again. Ensure that both in person and distance learning practices engage all learners, including those with disabilities and those who lack access to technology. Record schoolwide strategies you will use in Box 4B.
 - c. Indicate strategies or practices that can be used in collaboration with families and the community. Consider how these strategies could be adapted for distance learning should educational institutions be required to close again. Ensure that both in-person and distance learning practices engage all learners, including those with disabilities and those who lack access to technology. Record family- and community-level strategies you will use in Box 4C.
6. **When you complete this tool, answer the debrief questions** to identify what you have learned, what it means for the return to learning, and what must happen next.
 7. **Finally, complete the Action Plan in [Tool 0.2](#)** to list strategies to enhance resilience of the education system and compile in a single plan the key actions for follow-up.

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PROTECTION, MENTAL HEALTH, AND PSYCHOSOCIAL NEEDS MATRIX¹

DOMAIN	IMPACTS OF CRISES ON LEARNERS	POSSIBLE EDUCATION PROGRAM OBJECTIVES	CLASSROOM/ LEARNING SPACE LEVEL STRATEGIES	SCHOOL/ EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION LEVEL STRATEGIES	COMMUNITY LEVEL STRATEGIES
Child Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exacerbated poverty Early marriage Teen pregnancy Child labor Housing insecurity Food insecurity Neglect and abuse Exploitation and trafficking Forced displacement Increased engagement in risky behaviors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Destigmatize child protection issues (e.g., COVID-19 related illness, teen pregnancy) Re-engage learners affected by child protection issues (e.g., young mothers, married teens, displaced learners, child laborers) Help staff better understand COVID-19-specific child protection issues Develop linkages with existing resources in the community Help learners connect with existing resources in the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educators use referral pathways to ensure protection of learners Eliminate the use of corporal punishment Create a safe, healthy learning environment (During distance learning) Educators reach out to learners via text message or socially distanced meetings to ensure ongoing communication, safety, and engagement in learning Record daily class attendance to identify potential child protection issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build educators' awareness of child protection challenges and referral pathways Provide nutritious food and clean water for breakfast and/or lunch Train educators and staff on physical and psychological first aid Reduce barriers to school entrance to ensure enrollment for at-risk groups (e.g. school fees) Monitor enrollment and attendance of at-risk children and youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate community members and families about referral pathways (e.g. through community meetings) Engage community members in providing and preparing meals for learners Engage families and community members in dialogue about child protection issues Offer parenting or life skills workshops for caregivers Communicate with caregivers (e.g., through SMS) to support them when education institutions are closed

¹ Sources: IASC. (Feb. 2020). Briefing note on addressing mental health and psychosocial aspects of COVID-19 Outbreak-Version 1.1; The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. (2020). Technical Note: Protection of Children during the Coronavirus Pandemic (v.1) 1.

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Mental Health and Psychosocial Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of contracting the virus • Anxiety • Stress • Obsession with the crisis • Regressive behaviors • Difficulty concentrating and learning • Mental health effects of: teen marriage and pregnancy, child labor, abuse, exploitation, neglect, extreme poverty, displacement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach learners to identify emotions, manage stress, and build empathy • Build learners self-motivation or self-efficacy • Help learners build and maintain relationships and feel respect and responsibility for/toward others • Help learners develop skills for co-regulation and conflict resolution • Help learners develop abilities to control attention • Help learners develop communication skills • Foster a sense of belonging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators use referral pathways to help learners access mental health and psychosocial support • Implement social-emotional learning within classroom practices • Use learner-centered pedagogy to re-engage learners in academics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build educators' awareness of psychosocial/social-emotional challenges and referral pathways • Train teachers on SEL • Ensure utilization of referral pathways for individuals who need protection or mental health professional support • Implement school policies and practices that foster well-being • Post signs to remind learners to maintain a growth mindset (e.g., "Making mistakes means I'm learning") 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate community members and families about referral pathways (e.g., through community meetings) • Send weekly messages to families and caregivers with SEL tips (e.g., "Model active listening with your child. Ask them one thing they learned today.") • Hold parenting or life skills workshops to share SEL strategies with caregivers

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Locality: _____
Grade/Level: _____

Today's date: _____
Developed by: _____

**1. Conduct a child protection, mental health,
and psychosocial needs assessment**



2. List identified protection, mental health, and psychosocial impacts

Child protection impacts

Mental health and psychosocial impacts



3. Identify protection, mental health, and psychosocial objectives for school or program

Child protection objectives

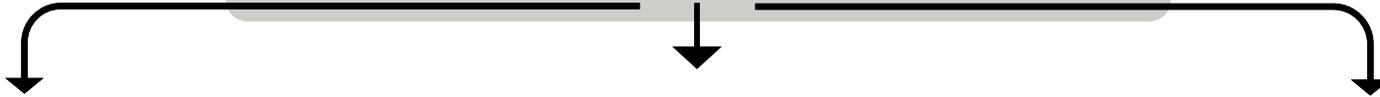
Mental health and psychosocial objectives



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4. Plan to address protection, mental health, and psychosocial impacts in the classroom, schoolwide, and in the community.



4A. Classroom/Learning Space

4B. School/Educational Institution Level

4C. Community Level

PLANNING DEBRIEF

WHAT?

What have you learned from this tool? What decisions have you made? What is missing?

SO WHAT?

What implications does this have for planning the return to learning? Why is this important?

NOW WHAT?

What must you do next? What challenges must you address?