

# PSS-SEL TOOLBOX

## Localizing Tools

## Workbook

**June 2022**

Developed by the EASEL Lab at Harvard University  
In partnership with the INEE PSS-SEL Collaborative

## The Localizing Tools are designed to help you gather local input to inform the selection, adaptation, or development of PSS-SEL materials in your organization, country, or context.

The tools in this section can be used in a variety of ways. Each Localizing Tool can be used on its own, or the tools can be used in sequence for a robust contextualization process.

PSS-SEL frameworks and materials created in one context do not always meet the needs or reflect the cultural values, norms, and practices of another context. This set of tools was created to help stakeholders explore their local needs and use the data and resources in the Toolbox to inform local decision-making about PSS-SEL work. Use the tools flexibly, based on your needs or the current objectives of your work. Use the tools to lead workshops with local community members or as part of your organization's PSS-SEL design and development work. Depending on your goals, time, and available resources, you may spend days, weeks, or months engaging in these localizing processes. The tools include reflection and planning guides, question sets for focus groups with local stakeholders, and guidance for how to prioritize key skills and validate PSS-SEL materials in your local community.

The following tools are included in this Workbook:

- **Identify Local Needs and Assets:** a four-step process to identify local PSS-SEL needs and assets, including question sets to lead focus group discussions in your community
- **Learn About Skills:** an Inventory of 24 concrete SEL skills and 30 features of context that support positive outcomes for children and youth, plus a reflection guide to consider how these concepts appear in your local context
- **Prioritize for Local Context:** a four-part exercise to reflect on and align local needs and key documents, refine terms and definitions for your context, and determine next steps in your work
- **Validate for Local Context:** a set of activities to examine the relevance and fit of PSS-SEL work in your local setting, by gathering feedback from community members

These tools are available in Arabic, French, Portuguese, and Spanish. Please contact **Rachel Smith**, INEE PSS-SEL Coordinator for more information: [rachel.smith@inee.org](mailto:rachel.smith@inee.org)

# IDENTIFY LOCAL NEEDS AND ASSETS

**A process to determine the PSS-SEL concepts most important in your setting. Use this tool to identify local assets and needs through a series of focus group discussions or other participatory methods in your community.**

## Overview

This tool guides you through a four-step process designed to identify local PSS-SEL assets and needs in your setting. The four steps in this process are:



## Why is it important?

The timing, relevance, and value of specific social emotional skills can vary across cultures and contexts. In addition, each organization or group of stakeholders (e.g., parents, teachers, and learners) may have unique assets and needs that influence how PSS-SEL efforts are valued, understood, and adopted. Existing resources may not prioritize the skills and supports that are valued in your context, so it is important to determine local needs, strengths, and goals to ensure that your work is relevant and effective. To do this, consider the specific goals, needs, and assets of your organization, the context, and population you serve.

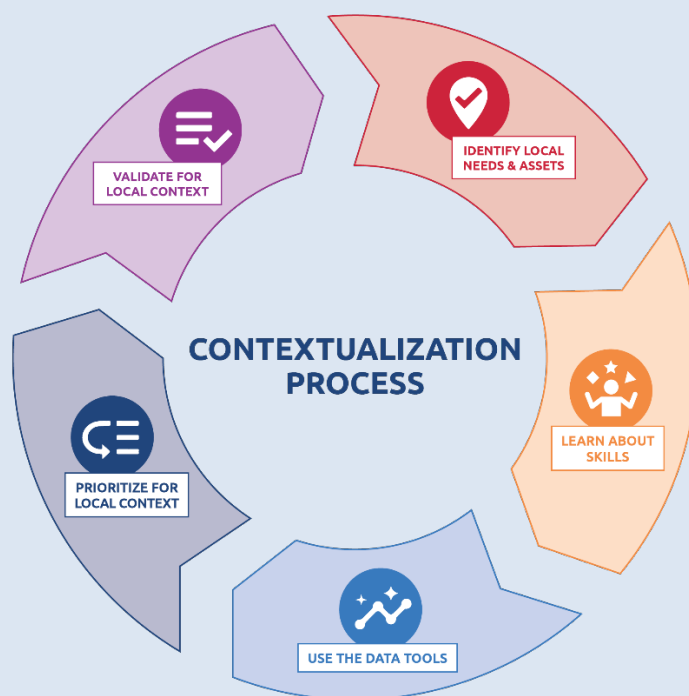
## How can you use it?

Use this tool to engage with different stakeholder groups to identify local assets, needs, values, and interests that can guide the design and development of PSS-SEL efforts in your setting. Consider using participatory methods to foster community-driven awareness and action. You can use data collected with this tool to identify the goals and outcomes of PSS-SEL programs or staff trainings, to find frameworks aligned to your assets and needs, to ensure that selected measures are aligned to the skills most relevant in your context, and to ensure that the terms or language used in your PSS-SEL framework and other materials are culturally relevant and reflect local values.

# ABOUT THE PSS-SEL TOOLBOX

The PSS-SEL Toolbox is a collaboration between the EASEL Lab and the Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE). The Toolbox is designed to support stakeholders working on psychosocial support (PSS) and social emotional learning (SEL) in education in emergency settings. It includes four Localizing Tools that can be used individually or in combination.

- Use **Learn About Skills** to review the field of PSS-SEL and peruse an inventory of 24 SEL skills and 30 contextual factors that affect the wellbeing of children and youth
- Use **Identify Local Needs and Assets** to engage local community members to determine the most important PSS-SEL needs in your setting
- Use **Prioritize for Local Context** to reflect on local PSS-SEL priorities, organize and define key concepts in alignment with local objectives, and plan for next steps in your setting
- Use **Validate for Local Context** to examine and revise the relevance and fit of your PSS-SEL work with feedback from local community members



You can find all the tools, as well as guidance on using them, interactive data tools to support localization, and other resources at <http://inee.exploresel.gse.harvard.edu/localizing-tools>.

### Additional Considerations and Resources

The guidance and resources in this toolbox may be supplemented with additional training and information around key issues, including the following.

**Conflict Sensitivity and Do No Harm:** Approaches to education and other programming in conflict contexts that seek to prevent or mitigate negative impacts and promote positive impacts on local dynamics.

Learn more at <https://inee.org/collections/conflict-sensitive-education>.

**Gender Equity and Social Inclusion:** Ensuring that all people, including members of excluded or marginalized groups have equitable access to full participation and representation in all aspects of programming.

Learn more at <https://inee.org/collections/inclusive-education> and <https://inee.org/collections/gender>.

**PSS-SEL Collection:** Resources, trainings, and research on PSS-SEL programming in education in emergencies contexts. Materials support quality design, implementation and monitoring of PSS and SEL programs.

Learn more at <https://inee.org/collections/psychosocial-support-and-social-and-emotional-learning>.

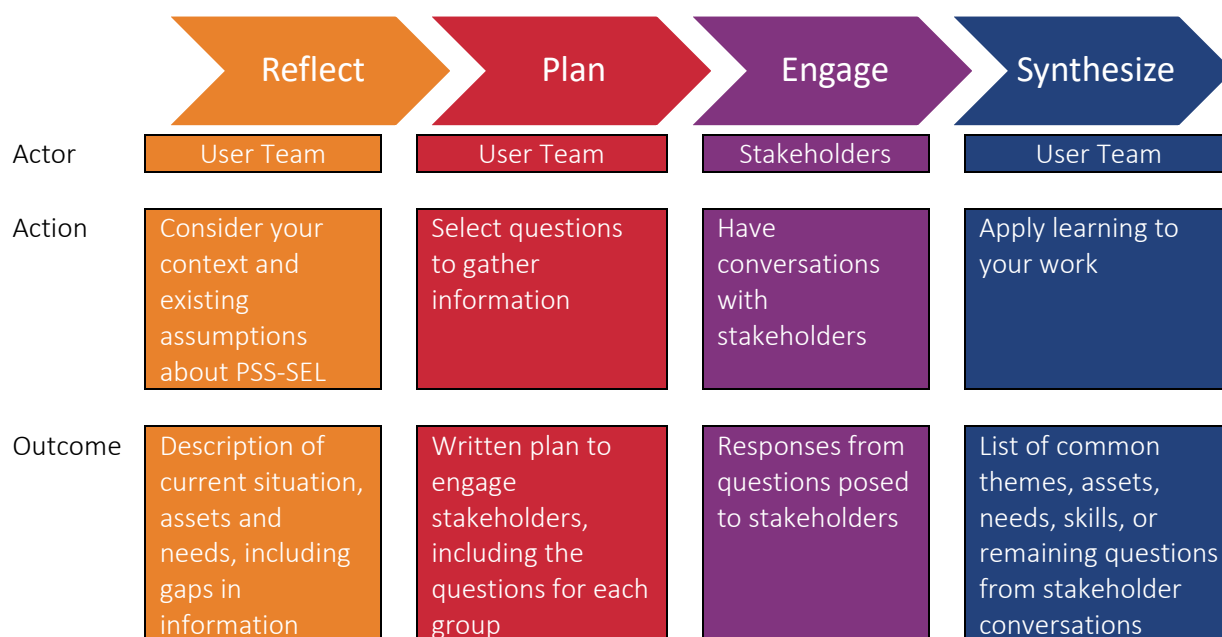
**Teacher Wellbeing:** Approaches that recognize educators and other practitioners as beneficiaries alongside their learners and addresses their needs and perspectives in programming.

Learn more at <https://inee.org/collections/teacher-wellbeing>.

## IDENTIFY NEEDS AND ASSETS: INTRODUCTION

This tool provides a comprehensive list of questions you can use in conversations with various stakeholders in your setting, with the goal of identifying local assets and needs related to PSS and SEL. The questions are situated within a four-step process. Use the four-step process to:

1. **REFLECT** on your objectives;
2. **PLAN** which questions to ask and who should be involved;
3. **ENGAGE** stakeholders to deepen your understanding and determine local assets and needs; and
4. **SYNTHESIZE** your learning to facilitate next steps in your work.



### What's inside?

Summary of the four steps.....	Page 5-6
<b>Reflect</b> Worksheets .....	Page 6-7
<b>Plan</b> Worksheets.....	Page 8-10
<b>Engage</b> Worksheets.....	Page 11-12
<b>Synthesize</b> Worksheets.....	Page 13-15
Questions sets to use for <b>Plan</b> and <b>Engage</b> .....	Page 16-29
Annex: Community Engagement Guide, References, and Additional Resources....	Page 30-32

## 1. REFLECT

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Depending on the focus of your work, what you already know about your setting, and what you still need to learn, you may find it useful to think broadly about your organization's assets and needs or to concentrate on a specific layer (such as child-level skill development or broader cultural norms). The guiding questions in the **STEP 1: REFLECT** worksheets are designed to help you consider your learning objectives, including which aspects of your setting you would like to learn more about. This will help you decide which themes and specific questions will be most useful for you to explore with local stakeholders.

## 2. PLAN

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The prompts in **STEP 2: PLAN** ask you to use your reflection and the provided question sets to identify questions that will help address your work and objectives, as well as the stakeholders who you plan to engage in conversation. The question sets are organized into three themes. Use the questions in each theme to explore a different layer of needs and assets:

- **Children and Youth's Learning Goals**, including specific PSS-SEL skills, attitudes, values, and behaviors.
- **Learning Context and Practices**, including teacher wellbeing, curriculum, pedagogy, teacher-student relationships, classroom and school climate, and other practices that influence children's learning and development.
- **Social and Cultural Values, Roles, and Norms**, which influence how PSS-SEL efforts are understood, described, and adopted.

Use the **STEP 2: PLAN** Worksheet to document the specific questions and the stakeholders you plan to engage in order to determine the PSS-SEL assets and needs in your setting.

## 3. ENGAGE

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This step is the most time intensive, but it can have a big impact on the quality and relevance of your PSS-SEL work. Schedule time to meet with stakeholders and others involved in your work to discuss the questions you selected.

Use the **STEP 3: ENGAGE** worksheet to take notes about what you learn. You may choose to organize a series of focus groups over multiple days, weeks, or months. You may invite many different stakeholders to discuss these questions together, or you may decide to host separate sessions for each group of stakeholders. Consider the time and resources you have available, and the specific objectives of your work in making decisions.

## 4. SYNTHESIZE

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The last step of this process is to summarize what you have learned. As you review and synthesize the outcomes of your conversations with stakeholders, note any insights and findings that surface.

Use the **STEP 4: SYNTHESIZE** worksheet to document what you've learned about the PSS-SEL skills, values, assets, needs, strengths, and goals that are most important in your setting. Consider what these findings mean for your work and next steps.

## STEP 1: REFLECT

When developing, adapting, or implementing PSS-SEL materials, it is important to identify your setting's intrinsic assets, unique needs, and relevant skills and supports. This worksheet guides you through a four-step process designed to prompt conversations with various stakeholders in your setting, with the goal of identifying local assets and needs related to PSS and SEL.

You may also decide to use participatory methods to engage stakeholders in the research, action, and reflection process. Participatory methods include a diverse range of activities that enable stakeholders to influence decisions that affect their lives. Local knowledge and experiences drive actions and impact outcomes, and interventions that involve stakeholders are often more reflective of and responsive to their context, which may result in stronger support and more sustainable change.

## REFLECTION ACTIVITY

First, choose the type of activity you want to use to reflect. This activity can be done individually or with your user team. Some reflection activities include:

- **Small group discussion:** Read each question aloud and invite team members to share their ideas. Take notes on a board or flipchart for everyone to see.
- **Visualization:** A facilitator reads each question aloud. Team members close their eyes and visualize their response. Members can share their ideas after each question or at the end.
- **Think/pair/share:** Team members sit with a partner. After a facilitator reads each question, each member thinks for one minute, then discusses their ideas with their partner for a minute, and then each pair shares what they discussed with the group.
- **Gallery walk:** Write each question on a big piece of paper and post them around the room. Team members walk around the room and take turns writing responses to each question.

Next, use your chosen reflection activity to consider the following questions:

- What are your **goals and objectives** as a project or an organization/institution/agency? What are the goals and objectives of the learners you serve? Of their schools or education settings? Of their families and communities?
- What do you know about the **assets** in your setting? Assets can be drawn from individuals, resources, culture and values, institutions, and policies. In terms of the assets in your setting, what are you unsure of, don't understand, or want to learn more about?
- What do you know about the **PSS-SEL needs** in your setting? In terms of the needs in your setting, what are you unsure of, don't understand, or want to learn more about?
- What do you know about the **SEL skills** that are important in your setting? In terms of SEL skills that are important in your setting, what are you unsure of, don't understand, or want to learn more about?



- What **processes** (ex: observations, interviews, surveys, community mapping, etc.) can you use to answer your questions about assets, needs, and skills? – See the Community Engagement Activity Guide on page 32 for more ideas.
- **Who are you including?** How are you supporting equitable and inclusive participation to ensure you are not leaving anyone out (ex: people with disabilities, out-of-school children, minorities, etc.)? What might be some differences in assets, needs, and skills between these groups? How can this process include the voices and participation of everyone in your community?

## REFLECTION NOTES

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After the activity, record all of the team's ideas and thoughts in one central place. You can use a board, flip chart, or the space on this page:

Goals and Objectives

Assets

Needs

Skills

Processes

Inclusion

## STEP 2: PLAN

### PLAN PART 1: IDENTIFYING QUESTIONS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Based on your responses above in **REFLECT**, what questions will help you gather the information you need to further your work?

First, read through your reflection notes on the previous page with your user team. **Discuss any big ideas, themes, or issues** that stand out to you about:

- Children and youth's learning goals
- Learning context and practices
- Social and cultural values, roles, assets, and norms

**Write those ideas, themes, and questions** in the gray box of each chart on the next page (page 10).

Next, read through the relevant question sets on page 17-32. Compare the questions in each question set to your responses in the corresponding gray box. **Note which questions will help you answer** or understand your ideas, themes, and issues and write them in the left column of each chart. You can add space to the charts to ask as many questions as needed.

Remember that not all questions will be applicable to each group of stakeholders. Although some questions were written with specific stakeholders in mind (e.g., teachers, parents and caregivers), you can use the questions flexibly with different groups. Choose questions based on the information you think is important to help you identify assets and needs for your work and your setting.

After you have a list of questions in each chart, **identify the stakeholders** whose perspectives will help answer the question and write them in the right column. Don't forget to consider all relevant stakeholders, including children or youth themselves and other marginalized groups. Different perspectives are a good thing – you can list more than one stakeholder group per question.

The specific questions you select, and the number of questions or themes you consider, will vary from user to user. It is not necessary to ask all of the questions in the question sets. You may also create your own questions and add them or adapt existing questions.

### Children and Youth's Learning Goals

Reflection ideas, themes, issues:	
Questions	Stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Example: What are your hopes for the future? What do you want to do/be, how do you want to live, etc.?</i></li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Out-of-school children</i></li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>

### Learning Context and Practices

Reflection ideas, themes, issues:	
Questions	Stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>

### Social and Cultural Values, Roles, and Norms

Reflection ideas, themes, issues:	
Questions	Stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>

## PLAN PART 2: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESSES

Using the list of stakeholders identified in the right column of each chart, plan an activity to ask those questions. It can be one unified activity for all stakeholders, or multiple smaller activities depending on your setting. This guide provides guidance for conducting a Focus Group Discussion on page 13, but you can use any engagement activity that is appropriate for stakeholders in your setting. See the Community Engagement Activity Guide on page 32 for more ideas. You can expand these planning charts or plan for more than three groups on separate paper.

Stakeholder Group	Location or institution	Type of Engagement
<i>Educators</i>	<i>Cambridge Primary School 14C</i>	<i>Skills mapping workshop</i>
<b>Planning Notes</b> <i>Request permission from head teacher to conduct the activity during the next monthly staff meeting (always takes place on 1<sup>st</sup> Monday of the month)</i> <i>Send an email reminder to all teachers the day before</i> <i>Bring flipchart paper and markers</i> <i>Ask teachers to bring their laptops or phones to access the data tools during the activity</i>		

Stakeholder Group	Location or institution	Type of Engagement
<b>Planning Notes</b>		

Stakeholder Group	Location or institution	Type of Engagement
<b>Planning Notes</b>		

Stakeholder Group	Location or institution	Type of Engagement
<b>Planning Notes</b>		

## STEP 3: ENGAGE

Use the template on the following page (page 13) to administer each focus group discussion.

**Before each focus group discussion, fill in the gray boxes using the information on stakeholders and questions from Step 2: PLAN.**

The template is just a guide. Many focus groups will have more than 5 questions or produce additional information. You can copy the blank template for multiple focus group discussions, change the format, or add space for additional questions and notes.

Some guidance on Focus Group Discussions:

- Plan ahead! Ensure that activity logistics (like space, seating, etc.) make participation easy and comfortable. Have documents and materials ready.
- Clearly explain the purpose of the activity and get informed consent from each participant. Anonymize information—you can present findings in aggregate and remove all names so you can speak to the feedback from participants overall rather than a particular individual.
- Record responses by taking notes, writing on a board or flip chart, or audio recording (if the group agrees to you recording).
- Allow discussion, dissent, and disagreement. Even within one stakeholder group there may be diverse ideas and perspectives. The purpose of this activity is to share all ideas, not find a single answer.
- Promote inclusion. Make sure that any relevant marginalized groups are invited and included in appropriate ways, for example using translators, hosting women-only activities if needed, and encouraging participants to speak out.
- Value all ideas and participation. Show participants that you are listening to and recording what they share, even if you don't agree with their ideas.
- Thank participants at the end of the activity and inform them of how their ideas will be used and ways they can continue to participate or see the final results.

## TEMPLATE: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

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Before the focus group activity, fill in the gray boxes. During the focus group activity, record responses in the white boxes.

Stakeholder Group	Location or Institution	Date
Participant names, titles, and/or roles:		
Question 1:		
Responses/Notes:		
Question 2:		
Responses/Notes:		
Question 3:		
Responses/Notes:		
Question 4:		
Responses/Notes:		
Question 5:		
Responses/Notes:		

## STEP 4: SYNTHESIZE

As a user team, read through the notes and/or listen to the recording of each focus group discussion.

Pause after each section to note common or outstanding themes and ideas. For each theme or idea, consider which category it applies to and record it in the corresponding box below. Feel free to create new categories that better capture the emergent themes from your focus group discussions.

You may want to indicate the stakeholder group that produced the idea, highlight ideas that came up across multiple stakeholder groups, or note ideas that were controversial or different across stakeholder groups.

### Insights and Findings: Children and Youth's Learning Goals

### Insights and Findings: Learning Context and Practices

### Insights and Findings: Social and Cultural Values, Roles, and Norms

## SYNTHESIZE SKILLS

Review the focus group notes and/or recordings again. This time, **record any time a participant mentioned a SEL skill, value, attitude, or behavior**. Write that in a box in the left column.

Then, for each skill you wrote in the left column, **write the context** in the right column. For example, if the participants mentioned communication as a skill, they might have described it in the context of understanding and working with peers and teachers at school, or they might have discussed challenges in their community communicating across language groups.

Often, focus group discussions will center on a context without naming the corresponding SEL skill, value, attitude, or behavior. For example, a group may have mentioned that fighting among different identity groups is a big problem in schools. Review the focus groups notes and recording again, **adding assets or needs** mentioned by participants in the right column.

Then, for each asset or need, **consider what SEL skill is relevant to address that asset or need**. For example, values or attitudes of community solidarity could help address fighting at school. You can use the SEL Skills Inventory on page 14-17 of Learn About Skills, or refer to the Explore SEL Thesaurus at <http://exploresel.gse.harvard.edu/terms/>.

Read through the SEL Skills Inventory on page 14-17 of Learn About Skills again. **Note any other domains or skills that relate to what participants brought up throughout discussions**. Did the participants leave out any skills or domains that are relevant to your setting? Record them in the chart.

You may also want to indicate skills or contexts that came up across all/multiple stakeholder groups, that only were mentioned by certain groups, or that were subject to disagreement between/within groups. You can add notes within or in addition to the chart.

SEL Skill, Value, Attitude, or Behavior	Context: Local Asset or Need
<i>Communication</i>	<i>Asset: Learners have the skills to understand and work with peers and teachers at school</i>
<i>Community Solidarity</i>	<i>Need: Learners are fighting at school</i>



## FINAL SYNTHESIS

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Read back through your notes from each step of this process. Based on your specific objectives, consider how you will use the information and findings you gathered to inform your work. Consider what these findings mean for the selection, adaptation, or development of materials and resources such as PSS-SEL frameworks, staff trainings, curricula, etc., that will be best suited to your work and your setting. Document your plans and next steps below.

**Goals and Objectives**

**Assets, Needs and Skills**

**Inclusion**

**Materials and Resources**

**Processes: Next Steps**

If you plan to use all of the Localizing Tools in sequence, you will continue to work with these insights and findings in subsequent tools.

## IDENTIFY NEEDS AND ASSETS: QUESTION SETS

Use the sample questions in the pages below to guide a series of focus group discussions with different groups of stakeholders in your context. Review the questions in order to select the themes and specific questions that are most relevant to what you want to learn more about.

Questions are organized by the following categories:

### CHILDREN AND YOUTH'S LEARNING GOALS, pages 17-19

Skill Development

Behaviors

### LEARNING CONTEXT AND PRACTICES, pages 20-25

Teacher Wellbeing

Curriculum

School and Classroom Climate

*Learner-Learner Relationships*

*Learner-Educator Relationships*

*Educator-Educator Relationships*

*Educator-Administrator Relationships*

*Nonformal Education Settings*

Discipline

Pedagogy

Family and Community Engagement

### SOCIAL & CULTURAL VALUES, ROLES, ASSETS AND NORMS, pages 26-28

Values and Roles

Assets

Cultural Norms

The question sets above are designed to be used with adults – including with teachers, parents, caregivers, school and community leaders, and other stakeholders. If you plan to conduct focus groups directly with children and youth, please consider the following:

### GUIDED QUESTIONS FOR ENGAGING CHILDREN AND YOUTH, page 29

## CHILDREN AND YOUTH'S LEARNING GOALS

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This category includes questions like...

- What does it mean for a child or youth to be successful in your setting?
- What are the skills or qualities that help a child or youth succeed at school or in education? [1]
- What skills or qualities do children and youth learn at home that help them their education? [1]
- What is already happening at home or in learning environments to help children and youth gain these skills?

Explore the full list below.

### Skill Development

1. What does it mean for a child or youth to be successful in your setting?
2. Think of someone successful in your setting. What are their strengths?
3. What are the skills or qualities that help a child or youth succeed in education settings? [1]
  - a. What skills or qualities do children and youth learn at home that help them in education settings? [1]
4. What is already happening at home, schools, or other education settings to help children and youth gain these skills? What is working well?
5. What more could be done at home, schools, or other education settings to teach these skills?
6. What strengths, skills, and capacities do your learners have? What skill sets, behaviors, or lessons do your learners struggle with?
7. How do learners' strengths, skills, and values help them deal with challenges or change?
8. What do children and youth in your setting understand? What do they know? What can they do? What might this indicate about the skills they possess?
9. How do you know when children and youth are learning effectively? What does it look like?
10. What changes would you like to see in education settings or at home (e.g., child behaviors, learner outcomes, classroom climate, etc.)?
11. How do caregivers or educators manage stress or conflict with children and youth?
12. What stories are told to children in your setting to teach behaviors or skills? What games are played to teach behaviors or skills? Are there other activities children engage in to learn behaviors or skills?
  - a. Why is it important for children to participate in these stories, games, or activities?

13. Below is a list of some of the skills that matter to communities in different parts of the world.

Which of these skills are highly valued in your community? What do these skills look like in your community? Are any of these skills not relevant or valued in your community?

- **Be a good citizen or member of the community** (including making ethical decisions, being responsible, and engaging effectively with the community)
- **Interact with others and/or resolve conflicts** (including working well with others, building relationships with peers and adults, managing conflict or disagreement with peers or siblings, and understanding social norms/expectations and cues)
- **Hold attitudes, perspectives, and/or mindsets that are helpful in this community** (including how children and youth see themselves and others, what children and youth believe about their own abilities or strengths, and how children and youth understand and deal with obstacles or challenges)
- **Understand, process, and communicate emotions in healthy ways** (including understanding emotions in oneself and in others; the ability to express feelings such as frustration, anger, sadness, excitement, or pride in appropriate ways; and the ability to understand and respond to others' emotions, needs, and perspectives)
- **Use attention and behavior to work towards goals** (including setting goals, planning, and problem-solving; using patience or self-discipline when needed; the ability to focus/listen carefully and ignore distractions, to remember directions or multiple steps, to think critically and/or creatively, and to manage behavior in ways that are culturally and situationally appropriate)

14. What's missing from the skills, values, attitudes, and behaviors that are listed above?

## Behaviors

1. Are children and youth typically rewarded for positive behavior? How do caregivers or educators reward children and youth for good behavior?
  - a. Are there different rewards for learners of different genders, ages, or abilities?
2. If children and youth misbehave, how does the caregiver or educator respond?
  - a. Are there different responses for learners of different genders, ages, or abilities?
3. What behaviors are difficult for educators to handle in the classroom or for caregivers to handle at home (for example, learners being mean to others, learners being too shy to speak, learners talking with their friends during class, etc.)? What behaviors are easy or enjoyable for educators to handle in the classroom or for caregivers to handle at home (for example, children sharing readily, children expressing their opinions, children working independently or in a group/with siblings)?
  - a. Do those behaviors typically happen at certain times (for example, getting ready for school in the morning, recess, transitioning between classes, bedtime, etc.)?
  - b. Do those behaviors typically happen when children and youth are asked to do certain things (for example, when children play group games, when they take turns, etc.)?

- c. Do those behaviors typically happen among specific (groups of) children and youth (for example, between new learners and learners who have been at the school for a long time, between older and younger children, between or within groups of male or female learners, etc.)?
  - d. Why do you think those behaviors happen in those situations (for example, do learners act out/misbehave in a large circle in the classroom because they aren't comfortable being grouped with the opposite gender)?
4. Do children and youth who have experienced displacement or other forms of distress/adversity exhibit behaviors that are different from those of children who have not? If so, how are their behaviors different?
5. Do children with dis/abilities exhibit behaviors that are different from those of children and youth who do not have dis/abilities? If so, how are their behaviors different?
6. How is conflict between children and youth typically managed in the classroom and at home?
  - a. Are some methods more effective than others?
  - b. Ideally, how would conflict in the classroom or at home be managed?

## CLASSROOM OR LEARNING SETTING: CONTEXT AND PRACTICES

This category includes questions like...

- What are the main challenges educators face in your setting?
- What are the main challenges learners face in your setting?
- What are typical rules and expectations for learner behavior in the classroom?
- What does parental, family, and/or community engagement look like in your setting?

Explore the full list below.

### Teacher and Educator Wellbeing [2]

1. Why do people in your setting become teachers or educators?
2. Are educators respected within the community? Do educators feel their concerns and needs are acknowledged and addressed?
3. What motivates educators to join and continue in their profession?
4. What does teacher wellbeing mean in your setting? This may include professional development and support, peer networks, workplace conditions, psychosocial support, a sense of purpose or success, or any other factors that constitute wellbeing in your community.
5. Do educators know how to support their own wellbeing? If so, how do they do this (for example, practicing mindfulness, using stress management techniques, other coping mechanisms, practicing religion, participating in teacher learning circles etc.)?
6. Do educators provide peer support to one another? If so, how? Do educators receive support from their head teacher/supervisor, education administrators, parents, or community members, etc.? If so, how?
7. If educators have been displaced, how has their wellbeing been impacted (for example, stress, lack of resources, different language of instruction, overcrowded classrooms, etc.)?
8. Do teachers feel satisfied by their job?
9. Which groups of learners do educators successfully support in the classroom? How do educators support those learners? Which groups of learners or learner behaviors do educators struggle to support in the classroom? Why?
10. What is a common opportunity, hope, or dream voiced by educators? What is a common concern voiced by educators?
11. What additional support would educators like to receive to improve their wellbeing?
12. What are the hardest parts of the classroom routine for educators? Are there specific spaces, times, or strategies that are chaotic or stressful? What makes those difficult?
13. What are the easiest parts of the classroom routine for educators? Are there specific spaces, times, or strategies that are enjoyable or engaging for educators (and/or children)? What makes those easy?
14. When educators are feeling good about their work, what do they like about the work itself?

## Curriculum

1. What parts of the curriculum that you are using include social and emotional skills?
  - a. For what age groups are social and emotional skills part of the curriculum (for example, a module in every grade, a module every few grade levels, or emphasized at every stage of a remedial learning program)? Are there specific social and emotional skills that are emphasized for certain age groups (for example, in primary vs. secondary)?
  - b. If there are classrooms in which multiple ages are using the same curriculum, does the developmental stage of learners influence the social and emotional skills that are taught and/or how those skills are taught?
  - c. How widely implemented is the curriculum that includes social and emotional skills? What aspects of the adoption of the curriculum have been successful? What aspects of the adoption of the curriculum have been challenging?
  - d. What standards and/or national competency frameworks exist that describe which of these social and emotional skills learners should have or be able to do?
  - e. Are there any frameworks (organizational, local, regional, national or international) which outline the social and emotional skills that you use or that have been adapted to skill-building in your setting? If so, what are they and what skills do they include? What adaptations are made (formally or informally)?

## School, Classroom, and Education Setting Climate

1. Do educators and learners feel safe, secure, and included when in the classroom or learning setting?
2. How do educators create a safe and inclusive learning environment for all learners?
3. What other factors currently contribute to creating safe and inclusive learning environments for all learners?
4. What motivates educators and learners to act (e.g., contribute talents or voice concerns)?
5. What are the core factors that contribute to the classroom/school climate when it is at its best?
6. Think of a time when educators and learners are at their best. What contributes to those moments? What characterizes those moments?
7. What are the main challenges that educators face in feeling safe and included?
8. What are the main challenges that educators face in creating a safe and inclusive learning environment?
9. What are the main challenges that learners face in feeling safe and included?

### *Learner-Learner (or Student-Student) Relationships*

1. Are there opportunities during class time for learners to collaborate and support one another? In what ways do they help one another set and reach goals? How do they hold one another accountable in their learning?

2. Are there any existing tensions or challenges between groups of learners that stop them from collaborating or supporting one another (e.g., language, religion, socioeconomic status, gender, age, ability, etc.)?
3. Do learners engage in problem solving processes together? If so, how?
4. How do learners resolve conflict among their peers in the classroom?
5. In what ways do learners take turns exercising peer leadership?
6. In what ways do learners play a role in building a welcoming environment for all learners?
7. How are learners guided to respect one another and value one another's experiences and ideas? Can you please provide an example of this?
8. In what ways do learners spend time gathered with one another (e.g., circle time or morning meetings) to share elements of their learning, lives, and communities such as thoughts, feelings, news, or ideas?
9. What rituals do learners engage in as a class for planning, acting, reflecting, and marking significant occasions?

#### *Learner-Educator (or Student-Teacher) Relationships*

1. What systems are in place to promote and maintain an equitable and inclusive learning environment? Do educators differentiate instruction across readiness, language levels, needs, interests, learning styles, strengths, and/or challenges? If so, how?
2. In what ways do learners share responsibility for their learning and learning environment? Do learners have the opportunity and feel welcome to provide feedback on what is or is not working and be involved in implementing changes and new ideas? What guidance and support do educators provide toward this goal? Are educators responsive to learners' experiences, goals, needs, and ideas? If so, how?
3. How do educators build secure learner-teacher relationships that encourage learners to engage in inquiry-based learning, take risks, and grow?
4. Are action and reflection built into learners' class routines? How do educators scaffold this process?
5. How do educators set clear expectations for their learners?
6. In what ways do educators help learners believe in their ability to improve and succeed?
7. In what ways do educators use positive reinforcement and constructive feedback?
8. In what ways do educators approach assessment in ways that improve learning?

#### *Educator-Educator (or Teacher-Teacher) Relationships*

1. Are there opportunities for educators to share their skills, knowledge, and experiences with one another? In what ways do educators share lesson plans, teaching strategies, successes, and failures?
2. Are responsibilities shared among educators?
3. Do educators engage with one another compassionately? Can you please provide an example of this?
4. Is there a culture of positive and effective exchange? Do educators ask for and offer help and provide and integrate feedback? Can you please provide an example of this?



5. How do educators celebrate successes and/or special events?
6. How do educators promote and maintain an equitable and inclusive teaching environment among themselves?

#### *Teacher-Parent/Caregiver Relationships*

1. How do educators communicate with parents/caregivers (e.g., in-person meetings, phone calls, take-home reports, at PTA meetings, etc.)? How often do educators communicate or engage with parents/caregivers in these different ways?
2. To what extent is information about what learners are learning communicated to parents/caregivers?
3. How do educators build and maintain positive relationships with parents/caregivers that encourage and support positive engagement and collaboration?
4. How involved are parents/caregivers in learning settings (e.g., as volunteers, PTA members, School Management Committee members, Mothers and Father Councils, teaching assistants, etc.)?
5. What are some examples of successful collaboration between educators and parents/caregivers in this setting? In what areas/ways do the values of educators and parents/caregivers align?
6. Are there any existing tensions or challenges between educators and parents/caregivers in this setting? Are there areas/ways that the values of educators and parents/caregivers contradict?

#### *Teacher-Administrator Relationships*

##### *Formal School Settings*

1. What does trust in headteachers/administrators look like for teachers?
2. What does trust in teachers look like for headteachers/administrators?
3. In what ways are headteachers/administrators responsive to teachers' experiences, ideas, and needs?
4. How do headteachers/administrators provide modeling/mentoring for teachers?
5. How do headteachers/administrators work to address sources of job stress?
6. How do headteachers/administrators support and initiate opportunities for professional development for all teachers?
7. How do headteachers/administrators integrate relevant research and best practices into school approaches and dialogue?
8. How do headteachers/administrators promote and maintain an equitable environment for other headteachers/administrators, teachers, caregivers, learners, and the wider community?
9. Are teachers part of collaborative decision-making processes? If so, please provide an example.
10. Do teachers feel comfortable suggesting or requesting professional development opportunities? If so, please provide an example.
11. Do teachers have access to supportive relationships with mentors, officially or unofficially? If so, please provide an example.
12. Are there formal partnerships in place that serve as a platform for collaboration, communication, and improvement? If so, please provide an example.

13. Do headteachers/administrators and teachers engage with one another compassionately? If so, please provide an example.
14. Do headteachers/administrators and teachers problem solve together around specific problems of practice connected to teachers' own classes? If so, please provide an example.
15. Do teachers have the opportunity to include creative practices in classroom teaching that are relevant to their learners' goals and needs? If so, please provide an example.
16. Do teachers have the opportunity to generate and activate school-wide practices to improve learning culture, processes, and outcomes? If so, please provide an example.

### *Nonformal Learning Settings*

1. Are there nonformal education programs in your setting? If so, what form do they take? Common forms include accelerated education, remedial programs, bridging programs, vocational training, religious education.
2. What learners do they serve? How do the needs, assets, or identities of those learners differ from the learners in formal education?
3. What types of programming or curricula are used in nonformal learning settings? What types of social and emotional skills do they include, if any?
4. What kind of teaching practices are typical in nonformal learning settings?
5. Do learners feel safe learning in nonformal education settings? Do educators?
6. Do learners have access to additional support services that support their wellbeing?
7. Do educators feel supported? What resources can they access to support their and their learners' wellbeing?

### **Discipline**

1. What are typical rules and expectations for learner behavior in your setting?
2. Do educators have a Code of Conduct or other type of rule system that learners are expected to follow? How was the Code of Conduct created? Who participated in the process?
3. What consequences do learners face when they violate school or classroom rules?
4. Do all learners receive the same consequences with the same consistency (e.g., girls and boys, learners with dis/abilities, etc.)? Do consequences vary for girls and boys? If so, how? Do consequences vary for learners with and without dis/abilities? If so, how?
5. Is corporal punishment used in your setting? Under what circumstances is it seen as acceptable or unacceptable? What are alternative methods used in your setting to establish consequences for misbehavior?
6. How is learner engagement and participation encouraged in your setting?
7. What are some of the most common infractions/violations that learners commit?
8. How do educational leaders and educators investigate the root causes of these infractions/violations?
9. What training have educators received on discipline in this setting and from whom (e.g. training on positive discipline, classroom management, etc.)?

## Pedagogy

1. What pedagogical training do educators in this setting typically have? Have any educators received specialized training on PSS-SEL? If so, when, from who, and what did it cover?
2. What pedagogical approaches do educators typically use to instruct learners? Are classes primarily lecture based? Are there open-ended discussions or is there a focus on right/wrong answers?
3. How do educators typically check for understanding? What formal or non-formal learner assessments are used?
4. Do learners typically ask questions in class? Why yes or why not?
5. Are educators expected to differentiate instruction? In what ways and for what purposes? Do they believe differentiation is important?
6. In what ways do educators typically group students to engage in learning? To what degree do they engage in group activities or group work with learners?
7. Do learners generally work as a whole class, in pairs, in groups, or individually?
8. How do educators meet the needs and abilities of learners with different home languages?
9. How do you know when children are learning? What does that look like?
  - a. How can you tell that a child is paying attention?
  - b. How can you tell that a child gets along with others?
  - c. How can you tell that a child likes school?

## Family and Community Engagement

1. How do parents and caregiver support their children's social emotional development?
2. How do parents and caregivers model SEL skills? Please provide examples.
3. What does parental, family, and community engagement look like in your setting?
4. What motivates caregivers to act (for example, contribute talents or voice concerns)?
5. Do caregivers have a system or outlet of expressing content or discontent with school management, course content, or other aspects of learning? If so, please provide an example.
6. What does caregiver literacy look like in your setting? What level of education have most caregivers achieved?
7. What is the general feeling toward the value of school in your setting? Of education?
8. What referral systems exist between learning settings and social services?
9. What other community institutions/programs impact learning or engage with learning settings (for example: churches/mosques, religious groups, civil society groups, political parties, youth groups, after school/recreational programs, etc.)?

## SOCIAL AND CULTURAL VALUES, ROLES, ASSETS, AND NORMS

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This category includes questions like...

- What are your hopes and dreams for children and youth in your setting, in terms of who they will become as people, how they will become successful in life, and how they will treat others?
- What are some of the cultural norms (for example, religion, family structure, worldviews, political events, etc.) that impact your setting?

Explore the full list below.

### Values and Roles

1. What does “success” mean to you or in this setting/community/culture?
2. What are your hopes and dreams for children in your setting, in terms of who they will become as people, how they will become successful in life, and how they will treat others?
3. What skills are necessary for children in your setting to be successful in life?
  - a. Which skills are the most important? Why?
4. Do you hope that educators would help children learn these skills in school or education settings? If so, why? If not, why not?
5. What are important values for a caregiver in your setting? For educators?
6. What is the role of educators and caregivers in meeting children’s needs (for example, developmental, wellbeing, or learning needs)? [2]
7. What is the role of educators and caregivers in protecting children’s rights? [2]
8. How do you think others in your setting value the role of a caregiver? Of an educator?
9. Do you have access to support services or referral processes in your setting? If yes, how do you access these services? What types of support are available for children and youth in your schools, education settings, or community? [2]
10. If you or others in your setting were considering whether to adopt new materials/curricula/teaching methods to help children succeed, what would need to be true for them to be adopted?
  - a. Evidence on:
    - i. Alignment with government, standards, or current initiatives?
    - ii. Feasibility in organizational capacity?
    - iii. Impact and value?
    - iv. Other?
  - b. Who would need to be included in conversations about adopting new materials/curricula/teaching methods to help children succeed, and what aspects of the idea do you think they would find interesting, promising, or concerning?
    - i. State government(s)?

- ii. Federal government or Ministry of Education?
  - iii. College governing board(s)?
  - iv. Federal or state Colleges of Education?
  - v. Federal or state curriculum/standards board(s)?
  - vi. Teachers' unions or advocacy groups?
  - vii. Education Cluster, Education in Emergencies Working Group, or Local Education Group?
  - viii. Others?
11. If you or others in your setting were considering whether to adopt new materials/curricula/teaching methods to help children succeed, what opportunities and facilitating factors exist? What challenges might you face?
  12. Have you adopted new materials/curricula/teaching methods before? If so, what made it successful or unsuccessful?

## Assets

1. In your setting, what is working well to support social emotional development and wellbeing? [3]
2. What do you wish you had more of? Of those wishes, which ones are the most important right now? [3]
3. What do you already have that you can build upon to achieve those wishes? [3]
4. How could the following assets support children and contribute to skill development in your setting?
  - a. What talents and gifts do the people in your setting possess (for example, community-building, enterprise, teaching, etc.)?
  - b. What types of associations (formal/informal groups of people, like clubs) exist in your setting?
  - c. What institutions (like schools, government agencies, or businesses) provide assets and resources in your setting (for example, meeting places, equipment, communication channels, etc.)?
  - d. What type of place-based assets (like land, buildings, heritage, or public spaces) exist in your setting?
  - e. What connections, social relationships, networks, and types of trust exist in your setting?
  - f. What types of shared ownership exist in your setting?
  - g. What types of citizen involvement exist in your setting (for example, citizen-centered production or community-based accountability mechanisms)?

## Cultural Norms

1. What are some of the cultural norms and experiences (for example, religion, family structure, worldviews, political events, etc.) that impact your setting?
  2. Have cultural norms changed in any way due to conflict, crisis, displacement, or other reasons?
  3. How do cultural norms impact how educators engage learners and how classroom activities are structured?
  4. How do cultural norms impact how educators engage with parents and caregivers about their learners?
  5. How do cultural norms about childhood experiences and expected child/learner behaviors play out in your setting? Are there any differences in expectations and experiences by age, gender, socio-economic status, etc.? How are these expectations communicated?
- Consider the experiences of different types of children:
- a. Are children expected to be vocal or more silent?
  - b. Are children encouraged to challenge adults and ask questions?
  - c. Are children expected to be respectful and obedient?
  - d. Are children encouraged to play and be creative?
  - e. Are children perceived as having opinions and values and able to make choices?
  - f. Are children expected to contribute to household work or income?
  - g. Are children expected to care for siblings or other children?
6. How do cultural norms around gender play out in your setting?
    - a. In the classroom? At home?
    - b. Are girls and boys expected to do the same activities in school, education settings, and/or at home?
    - c. Are girls and boys kept together or separate during learning and other activities?
    - d. What activities might be appropriate for one gender but not the other?
    - e. Are certain skills more important for one gender than another? Which skills and why?
  7. How do cultural norms around dis/abilities play out in your setting?
    - a. What are the beliefs and practices in your setting in relation to persons with dis/abilities? What supportive beliefs and practices exist? What harmful beliefs and practices exist?
    - b. Do persons with dis/abilities experience any specific forms of opportunity? Specific forms of discrimination or targeted violence?
  8. What challenges do persons with dis/abilities face?
    - a. What barriers do persons with dis/abilities face when they attempt to access services?
    - b. What formats and channels of communication are most accessible to persons with dis/abilities?
    - c. Are specific services that persons with dis/abilities require available/not available?

## GUIDED QUESTIONS FOR ENGAGING CHILDREN AND YOUTH

If your plan to engage with stakeholders includes children and/or youth, these questions may help you gain insight about their perceptions of PSS and SEL assets, needs and skills in your setting.

1. I want to begin by learning about what it's like to be a [child in this setting] (e.g., student at this school, youth in this afterschool program, etc.). Pretend that I just moved here. What do I need to know in order to be successful here?
  - What do I need to know about how to behave?
  - What do I need to know about making friends?
  - What do I need to know about the adults here?
  - *If applicable:* What do I need to know about the classes?
2. Next, I'd like to learn more about things that are important to you.
  - What do you think makes a good friend?
  - What do you think makes a good learner/student?
  - What do you think makes a good classmate?
  - What do you think are the strengths of students in this school/setting?
3. Now, I'd like to talk about people you know who are successful. What I mean by successful is that they seem to get along well with others and feel good about themselves.

*Note: Please feel free to change the word "successful" to a different word that may be more meaningful in your setting. Likewise, you should change the description of successful if a different definition is more appropriate for your work and your stakeholders.*

- How do successful students behave?
- How do successful community members behave?
- How do successful friends behave?
- What are your hopes for the future? What do you want to do/be, how do you want to live, etc.? What do you think you need to do to achieve those things?

## ANNEX: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES GUIDE

Community engagement is central to localization: engaging the ideas, perspectives, and opinions of stakeholders in your community will support your work to address their assets, needs, and priorities. This guide includes some ideas for activities to engage stakeholders in collecting this information through participatory and inclusive activities. These activities are meant to be illustrative examples that you can adapt, combine, or use to design other locally appropriate community engagement strategies.

### EXAMPLE ACTIVITIES

**Focus Group Discussions:** Facilitators lead a discussion on key issues or questions. Groups can be composed of one stakeholder group or be a mix of different stakeholders.

**Community Meetings:** Facilitators work with community leaders to hold discussions with community members about key issues as part of local activities such as town hall meetings.

**Key Informant Interviews:** Enumerators engage experts or representatives of different stakeholder groups in conversation about key issues or questions.

**Community Mapping:** Participants sketch a map of their community identifying the physical, social, and environmental assets and needs/challenges. Community mapping can be particularly useful when working with children and youth.

**Surveys:** Participants write out responses to written questions. Surveys can be particularly useful when participants cannot gather or are reviewing written materials independently, however it requires that all participants are literate.

**Home or School Visits:** Enumerators observe participants in their typical environment. Home/school visits can work well in combination with direct feedback channels and/or when field testing resources.

Key Issues and Considerations		
<b>EQUITY &amp; INCLUSION</b> Before conducting any community engagement activities, ensure that your process is representative and inclusive of diverse stakeholders in your context, including marginalized groups such as children and people with disabilities.  Read more at <a href="https://inee.org/collections/inclusive-education">https://inee.org/collections/inclusive-education</a> .	<b>DO NO HARM</b> Consider and mitigate any potential negative impacts of conducting community engagement activities that could exacerbate local tensions or trigger conflict.  Read more at <a href="https://inee.org/resources/do-no-harm-toward-contextually-appropriate-psychosocial-support-international-emergencies">https://inee.org/resources/do-no-harm-toward-contextually-appropriate-psychosocial-support-international-emergencies</a> .	<b>PRIVACY AND CONSENT</b> All participants should be fully informed of how their inputs and information will be used in the activity and allowed to opt out at any time. Any identifying information should be anonymized.  Refer to your organization's privacy, consent, and safeguarding protocols and policies.



## REFERENCES AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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### References

- [1] Jukes, M. C.H. (in preparation). *Adapting measures of social and emotional learning for context: Theory, rationale and guidelines.*
- [2] Teachers in Crisis Contexts Working Group (TICCWG). (2016, March 24). *Introduction to Training for Primary School Teachers in Crisis Contexts.* Retrieved from <https://inee.org/resources/teachers-crisis-contexts-training-primary-school-teachers>
- [3] The University of Memphis. (2016, April 7). *Engaged Scholar: Asset Based Community Engagement.* Retrieved from <https://www.memphis.edu/ess/module4/page5.php>

Many of the questions in this tool are adapted from qualitative interviews and focus group protocols designed by the EASEL Lab and collaborators working on SEL in international contexts:

- Bailey, R., Temko, S., Colagrossi, A. L., Ramirez, T., Jones, S. M., McCoy, D., & Brentani, A. (in preparation). Integrating social emotional learning into early childhood settings in Brazil. *NISSEM Global Briefs, Volume 3.*
- Bailey, R., Temko, S., Colagrossi, A. L., Ramirez, T., Jones, S. M., McCoy, D., & Brentani, A. (2019). *SEL kernels for early childhood in Brazil: Adaptation and implementation findings from focus groups and field testing with local teachers* [Paper Presentation]. Comparative and International Education Society, San Francisco: April 2019.
- Ramirez, T., Colagrossi, A. L., Temko, S., Bailey, R., Jones, S. M., Brentani, A., & McCoy, D. (2021). *Brazilian teachers' perceptions of a new approach to social emotional learning: Findings from a one-year contextualization process* [Paper Presentation]. Comparative and International Education Society, Virtual: April 2021.
- Caires, R., Dolan, C. T., Bailey, R., Nelson, B., Temko, S., Kaloustian, G., Harb, N., Kotob, W., Shrestha, R., Jones, S. M., & Aber, J. L. (in preparation). Starting from square two: Building a cohesive national SEL framework. *NISSEM Global Briefs, Volume 3.*
- Nelson, B., Temko, S., Bailey, R., & Jones, S. M. (2020). *Mapping social emotional learning and related skills across frameworks used by the Lebanon Ministry of Education* [Paper Presentation]. Comparative and International Education Society, Virtual: March 2020.
- Bailey, R., Raisch, N., Titus, B., Bautista, J., Temko, S., & Jones, S.M. (in preparation). "Innovations in SEL research and practice: Building from evidence and applying behavioral insights to the design of an SEL intervention in NE Nigeria."

## Additional Resources

See these additional resources for more information on how to conduct focus groups:

Center for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas. *Conducting Focus Groups*. Community Tool Box. Retrieved from <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/assessing-community-needs-and-resources/conduct-focus-groups/main>

National School Boards Association. (2013.) *Training Handbook: Organizing and Facilitating Focus Groups*. Retrieved from [https://cdn-files.nsba.org/s3fs-public/05\\_PET\\_FocusGroups\\_Handbook.pdf?cVFz.heuGUiKZnO.caQz8Qjftx7AV9Fk](https://cdn-files.nsba.org/s3fs-public/05_PET_FocusGroups_Handbook.pdf?cVFz.heuGUiKZnO.caQz8Qjftx7AV9Fk)

See these additional resources for more information on participatory methods:

Institute of Development Studies. *Participatory Methods*. Retrieved from <https://www.participatorymethods.org/>

## ABOUT THE TOOLBOX

This tool is part of a Toolbox that can be found online at <http://inee.exploresel.gse.harvard.edu>

The PSS-SEL Toolbox is a collaboration between the EASEL Lab and the Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE). The Toolbox is designed to support stakeholders working on psychosocial support (PSS) and social emotional learning (SEL) in education in emergency settings. For more information, please contact: **Rachel Smith, INEE PSS-SEL Coordinator**, [rachel.smith@inee.org](mailto:rachel.smith@inee.org)

### The EASEL Lab

The Ecological Approaches to Social Emotional Learning (EASEL) Laboratory is located at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. The EASEL Lab's work is focused on exploring the effects of high-quality social emotional interventions on the development and achievement of children, youth, teachers, parents, and communities. Our projects aim to advance the field of SEL through research, practice, and policy. The EASEL Lab also effects change through field-building projects, which work to strengthen the links between SEL evidence, policy, and practice by facilitating greater clarity, transparency, and precision in the field.

For more information about the EASEL Lab, please visit: <http://easel.gse.harvard.edu>

### INEE PSS-SEL Collaborative

The INEE PSS-SEL Collaborative is co-chaired by Silvia Diazgranados Ferrans and Julia Finder Johna. Rachel Smith is the PSS-SEL Coordinator at INEE. For more information about the PSS-SEL Collaborative, please visit <https://inee.org/collaboratives/pss-sel>

## PSS-SEL TOOLBOX

### Identify Local Needs and Assets

June 2022

Developed by the EASEL Lab at Harvard University  
In partnership with the INEE PSS-SEL Collaborative



**Inter-agency  
Network for Education  
in Emergencies**



**EASEL**  
lab

# LEARN ABOUT SKILLS

**An inventory of PSS and SEL concepts. Use this tool to become familiar with specific skills and contextual factors that support positive outcomes for children and youth.**

## Overview

This tool provides an overview of social and emotional learning and wellbeing with a list of 24 skills and 30 contextual factors that impact learning, health, and development, as well as a reflection guide to localize the skills and contextual factors to your context.



## Why is it important?

The field of PSS-SEL is wide and includes many different types of things – such as skills, competencies, attitudes, beliefs, values, and mindsets; as well as features of the environment and children’s backgrounds and experiences that contribute to wellbeing. This tool was created to help stakeholders understand the specific concepts often referred to as PSS and SEL and reflect on what they look like in your setting.

## How can you use it?

Use the **Inventory** to deepen your knowledge about PSS-SEL concepts that appear frequently in research, programs, curricula, and measurement tools. Use the **Reflection Guide** to consider how these concepts appear in your local setting, and what might be missing.

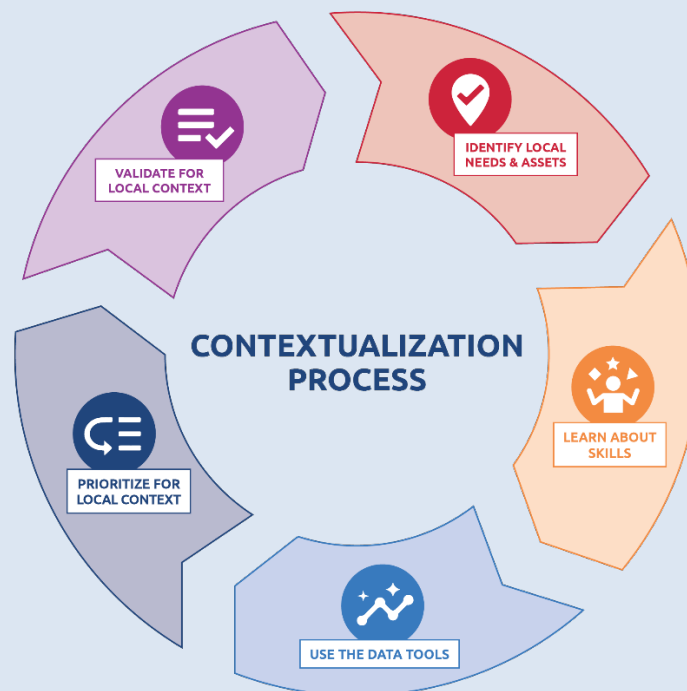
*Note: The lack of agreement about how to define and label PSS-SEL concepts and skills means that different frameworks use different terms to refer to similar concepts.*

[Explore the online Thesaurus to learn more.](#)

# ABOUT THE PSS-SEL TOOLBOX

The PSS-SEL Toolbox is a collaboration between the EASEL Lab and the Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE). The Toolbox is designed to support stakeholders working on psychosocial support (PSS) and social emotional learning (SEL) in education in emergencies settings. It includes four Localizing Tools that can be used individually or in combination.

- Use **Learn About Skills** to review the field of PSS-SEL and peruse an inventory of 24 SEL skills and 30 contextual factors that affect wellbeing of children and youth
- Use **Identify Local Needs and Assets** to engage local community members to determine the most important PSS-SEL needs in your setting
- Use **Prioritize for Local Context** to reflect on local PSS-SEL priorities, organize and define key concepts in alignment with local objectives, and plan for next steps in your setting
- Use **Validate for Local Context** to examine and revise the relevance and fit of your PSS-SEL work with feedback from local community members



You can find all the tools, as well as guidance on using them, interactive data tools to support localization, and other resources at <http://inee.exploresel.gse.harvard.edu/localizing-tools>.

## Additional Considerations and Resources

The guidance and resources in this toolbox may be supplemented with additional training and information around key issues, including the following:

**Conflict Sensitivity and Do No Harm:** Approaches to education and other programming in conflict contexts that seek to prevent or mitigate negative impacts and promote positive impacts on local conflict dynamics.

Learn more at <https://inee.org/collections/conflict-sensitive-education>.

**Gender Equity and Social Inclusion:** Ensuring that all people, including members of excluded or marginalized groups have equitable access to full participation and representation in all aspects of programming.

Learn more at <https://inee.org/collections/inclusive-education> and <https://inee.org/collections/gender>.

**PSS-SEL Collection:** Resources, trainings, and research on PSS-SEL programming in education in emergencies contexts. Materials support quality design, implementation and monitoring of PSS and SEL programs.

Learn more at <https://inee.org/collections/psychosocial-support-and-social-and-emotional-learning>.

**Teacher Wellbeing:** Approaches that recognize educators and other practitioners as beneficiaries alongside their learners and addresses their needs and perspectives in programming.

Learn more at <https://inee.org/collections/teacher-wellbeing>

## LEARN ABOUT SKILLS: INTRODUCTION

This tool provides a set of descriptions for PSS-SEL concepts that appear frequently in research, curricula, and assessment tools focused on child development and wellbeing. These descriptions are based on a comprehensive review of the developmental and prevention science literatures, conducted over the past decade to inform the design of programs and policies that support learning and development for children facing poverty, trauma, and other adverse experiences.

While this project has made efforts to analyze materials from a range of contexts around the world and includes documents from Colombia, the Gambia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, among many others, it is important to note that these descriptions are based primarily on scientific literature and resources published in English and largely from Western, stable contexts. As a result, the skills and descriptions may reflect norms, values, and concepts that are specific to those contexts. The PSS-SEL skills and descriptions in the Inventory may have different cultural relevance or meaning across diverse settings. Understanding skills-in-context and investing in localized frameworks is an important part of creating responsive, relevant SEL.

	Read About SEL Skills	Read About Wellbeing	Reflect
Actor	User Team	User Team	User Team
Action	Read Learn About Skills: PSS-SEL Overview and Inventory	Read Learn About Skills: Wellbeing Overview and Inventory	Annotate SEL and wellbeing guides and take notes on how members of your community define, value, and understand SEL and wellbeing
Outcome	Enhanced understanding of how literature defines SEL skills	Enhanced understanding of how literature defines wellbeing	Annotated Reflection Guide and notes on your understanding of how your community defines SEL and wellbeing

1. Read the **Overview of PSS-SEL** and **SEL Skills Inventory** to broaden and deepen your understanding of key PSS-SEL concepts that are used in the field.
2. Read the **Wellbeing Overview** and **Wellbeing Inventory** to broaden and deepen your understanding of how children's contexts, backgrounds, and experiences contribute to wellbeing.
3. Use the **Reflection Guide** to consider how these concepts appear and have relevance in your culture, context, or setting.

### What's inside?

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## LEARN ABOUT SKILLS: PSS-SEL OVERVIEW AND INVENTORY

### WHAT IS SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT (PSS-SEL)?

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Broadly speaking, **social and emotional learning (SEL)** refers to the process through which individuals learn and apply a set of social, emotional, cognitive, and related skills, attitudes, behaviors, and values that help direct their thoughts, feelings, and actions in ways that enable them to succeed in school, work, and life [1, 2]. SEL has been defined in a variety of ways [3]. The broad term has served as an umbrella for many sub-fields of psychology and human development, each with a particular focus (e.g., academic achievement, global citizenship) and has led to many types of community programs and educational interventions (e.g., bullying prevention, character education, peace education, life skills, social skills training, workforce development, 21<sup>st</sup> century skills) [4, 5]. The scope and focus of SEL frameworks, programs, and measurement tools vary widely: some focus on one specific skill (e.g., conflict resolution), while others are broader and include many different aspects of children's development, behavior, and experiences.

The term **psychosocial** refers to the dynamic relationship between aspects of an individual's psychological experience (including their thoughts, emotions, behaviors, memories, perceptions, and understanding) and their social experience (including their relationships, family and community networks, social values, and cultural practices), and acknowledges the impact of different aspects of experience on each other [6, 7]. **Psychosocial support (PSS)** is based on the idea that an individual's psychosocial wellbeing is determined by a combination of intertwined factors, including biological, emotional, spiritual, cultural, social, mental, and material aspects of their experience [8]. Instead of considering physical or psychological aspects of wellbeing in a vacuum, the term emphasizes the totality of an individual's experiences and the need to consider them within the contexts in which they occur [9]. Psychosocial support refers to the actions that address the psychological and social needs of individuals, families, and communities, with the ultimate goal of facilitating recovery from crisis and adverse events [8]. "Mental health" and "psychosocial support" are closely related terms that reflect different yet complementary approaches [8]. The term **mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)** is commonly used in the literature to describe actions that aim to promote psychosocial wellbeing and/or prevent or treat mental disorders for individuals, and are particularly important in crisis situations [10]. Those in the health sector tend to speak in terms of "mental health," whereas organizations outside the health sector are likely to reference "supporting psychosocial wellbeing." Exact definitions of these terms differ across organizations, disciplines, and countries [10].

### SEL SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES

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There are many ways of labeling and categorizing SEL skills and competencies. Below, we have identified six broad domains of SEL: **cognitive, emotion, social, values, perspectives, and identity**. These domains come from an analysis of SEL research and practice and were identified and refined through a review of



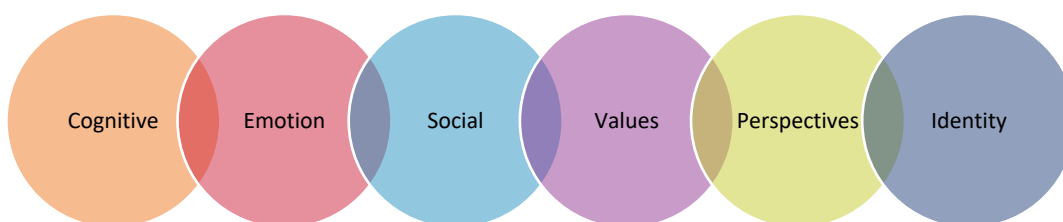
the literature that links social and emotional skills to positive child outcomes [11, 12] as well as a content analysis of common SEL frameworks [13], programs [14], and measurement tools [15] currently being used to guide, build, and assess skills in practical settings. For the PSS-SEL Toolbox, updates were made to reflect skills that appear frequently across frameworks and other materials developed and/or used in global education in emergencies (EiE) settings.



### Cognitive, Emotion, and Social Domains

The first three domains (cognitive, emotion, and social) encompass a set of SEL *skills and competencies* that children and youth are able to learn, practice, and put to use in their daily lives. These include **cognitive skills** such as executive functioning and critical thinking that enable children and youth to take in and interpret information and manage their thoughts, feelings, and behavior toward the attainment of a goal; **emotion skills** such as the ability to identify, understand, and manage their own emotions and to relate to the emotions of others through empathy and perspective-taking; and **social skills** such as the ability to build and maintain healthy relationships, resolve conflicts, and work and play well with others.

See the SEL Inventory (page 14-16) for a detailed description of the specific skills associated with each domain.



## COGNITIVE DOMAIN: “THINKING SKILLS”

**Definition:** Skills and competencies required to manage and direct behavior towards a goal, including those related to executive function, self-regulation, decision-making, and problem-solving.

**Application:** Children use cognitive skills whenever they are faced with tasks that require concentration, planning, problem solving, coordination, conscious choices among alternatives, or overriding an impulse or desire [16] – all key skills for learning and academic success.

### Key Subdomains

**Attention Control:** e.g., focusing on the class activity and following a teacher’s instructions

**Inhibitory Control:** e.g., raising a hand and waiting to be called upon instead of calling out answers

**Working Memory and Planning Skills:** e.g., recalling and completing a homework assignment

**Cognitive Flexibility:** e.g., navigating traffic safely while chatting with friends on the route to school

**Critical Thinking:** e.g., thinking through the consequences, a choice to accompany friends skipping class or follow the rules

**Cognitive Appraisal/Reappraisal:** e.g., redirecting your thoughts to a peaceful memory when you think of something that scares you

**Connections:** Cognitive skills also underlie many of the emotional and social processes that help children be successful members of a community. For example, children use cognitive skills to stop and think before acting in emotionally charged situations, which can be necessary for maintaining positive relationships and resolving conflicts peacefully.

## EMOTION DOMAIN: “FEELING SKILLS”

**Definition:** Skills and competencies that help children to identify, express, and manage their emotions, as well as understand and empathize with the feelings of others.

**Application:** Children use these skills to recognize how different situations make them feel, process and address those feelings in healthy ways, and communicate emotions in ways that are culturally appropriate. They also enable children to understand how different situations make *others* feel, and to respond accordingly.

### Key Subdomains

**Emotional Knowledge and Expression:** e.g., recognizing when you feel sad and telling a friend how you feel and what upset you

**Emotional and Behavioral Regulation:** e.g., keeping your voice down when you feel excited about something in the classroom, even when you would normally shout about it at home or in the school yard

**Empathy/Perspective Taking:** e.g., understanding how a peer with a physical disability who can't participate may feel left out of a sport you love, and inviting them to play a different game they can join

**Connections:** Emotion skills are fundamental to positive social interactions and to building relationships with peers and adults; without the ability to recognize and regulate one's emotions or engage in empathy and perspective-taking, it becomes difficult to interact effectively with others.

## SOCIAL DOMAIN: “SOCIAL SKILLS”

**Definition:** The social domain includes skills and competencies that support children and youth to understand others’ behavior, navigate social situations, and interact effectively with peers and adults.

**Application:** Skills in this domain are required to work collaboratively, solve social problems, build positive relationships, and coexist peacefully with others.

### Key Subdomains

**Understanding Social Cues:** e.g., recognizing when it’s time to be quiet and listen respectfully to an elder during a family ritual

**Conflict Resolution/Social Problem Solving:** e.g., working together to find a solution to a challenging situation with friends

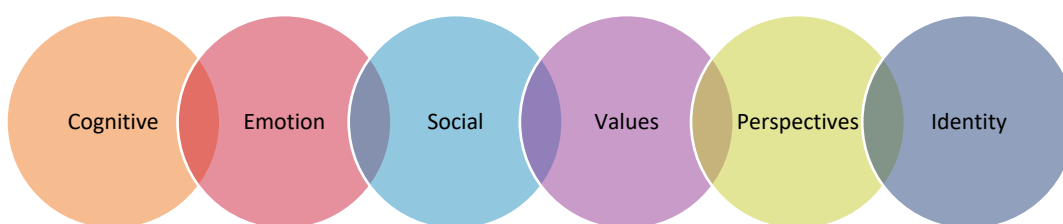
**Prosocial/Cooperative Behavior:** e.g., helping a classmate find the right page in the textbook

**Connections:** Social and interpersonal skills build on emotional knowledge and processes; as children learn to recognize, express, and manage their own emotions it helps them to understand and interact with others in socially- and culturally appropriate ways.

## Values, Perspectives, and Identity Domains

The skills and competencies above are accompanied by a “*belief ecology*” represented by the remaining three domains (values, perspectives, identity). This belief ecology includes a set of beliefs, values, attitudes, mindsets, and motivations that influence how a person views and understands themselves and the world around them. Together, these serve as an internal guide that directs a person’s behavior and actions based on the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they have. Belief ecologies not only influence the development of the skills included in the cognitive, social, and emotion domains, but also how we ultimately decide to use those skills, such as whether we use perspective-taking skills to empathize with the feelings of others vs. to take advantage of them.

See the SEL Inventory (page 14) for a detailed description of the specific skills associated with each domain.



## VALUES DOMAIN

**Definition:** Values, habits, and character strengths that support children to be prosocial and productive members of a particular community.

**Application:** Each community fosters the values of their children, such as caring about and acting upon a concern for justice, fairness, and the welfare of others; a desire to perform to one's highest potential; the pursuit of knowledge and truth; and the importance of participating in community life and serving the common good. Values in particular are closely tied to culture; they constitute what is valued and promoted by a particular group, institution, or community [17].

### Key Subdomains

**Ethical Values:** e.g., recognizing and working against discrimination

**Performance Values:** e.g., caring about doing well in school and earning good grades

**Civic Values:** e.g., appreciating and promoting peace

**Intellectual Values:** e.g., being interested in learning about a particular topic and teaching others about it

**Connections:** While conceptually distinct, in practice these four subdomains overlap and are interrelated [17]. For example, ethical values provide performance values with a prosocial orientation – otherwise, it is possible that someone might decide to bypass fairness, honesty, or caring in pursuit of high performance. Similarly, performance values help ensure that an individual has the strength and fortitude to act on their ethical values in the face of hardship and temptation [18].

## PERSPECTIVES DOMAIN

**Definition:** A set of attitudes, mindsets, and outlooks that influence how children interpret and respond to events and interactions throughout their day.

**Application:** A child's perspective encompasses how they view and approach the world. It impacts how they see themselves, others, and their own circumstances as well as how they understand and approach challenges. Perspectives can influence how a child responds to specific challenges or adversity.

### Key Subdomains

**Gratitude:** e.g., focusing on the good things you have rather than what you're missing

**Optimism:** e.g., believing that tomorrow will be better even if you're having a challenging day today

**Openness:** e.g., expressing interest in trying a new game or sport that you haven't played before

**Enthusiasm/Zest:** e.g., feeling excited about going to school every day

**Connections:** Perspectives help children achieve academic success, navigate interpersonal relationships, and practice self-care.

## IDENTITY DOMAIN

**Definition:** How children understand and perceive themselves and their abilities, such as their knowledge and beliefs about who they are and their ability to learn and grow.

**Application:** When a child feels good about themselves; sure of their place in the world; confident in their ability to learn, grow, and overcome obstacles; and capable of promoting their own wellbeing, it becomes easier to cope with challenges and build positive relationships.

### Key Subdomains

**Self Knowledge:** e.g., knowing what things you are good at and what things are a challenge for you

**Purpose:** e.g., believing that going to school every day will help you achieve your goals in the future

**Self Efficacy/Growth Mindset:** e.g., believing that you can get better at something you are struggling with now

**Self Esteem:** e.g., feeling like you are a good, worthy person

**Connections:** A sense of identity, when guided by prosocial values, can enable children to engage in prosocial behaviors [19]. Additionally, the relationship between identity and prosocial behavior is bidirectional—behaving in a prosocial manner can strengthen one’s sense of identity if one acts in a way that aligns with one’s values [20].



## SEL Skills Inventory: 24 SEL Skills and Competencies Linked to Child Outcomes

Cognitive Skills		
Name	Other Names	Description
<b>Attention Control</b>	Focus, listening skills, concentration	The ability to attend to relevant information and goal-directed tasks while resisting distractions and shifting tasks when necessary, such as listening to the teacher and ignoring kids outside on the playground.
<b>Inhibitory Control</b>	Impulse control, self-control, patience, “stop and think”	The ability to suppress or modify a behavioral response in service of attaining a longer-term goal by inhibiting automatic reactions like shouting out an answer while initiating controlled responses appropriate to the situation such as remembering to raise one’s hand.
<b>Working Memory and Planning Skills</b>	Remember and follow multi-step directions, make and follow a plan	Working memory refers to the ability to cognitively maintain and manipulate information over a relatively short period of time, and planning skills are used to identify and organize the steps or sequence of events needed to complete an activity and achieve a desired goal.
<b>Cognitive Flexibility</b>	Task transitions, multitasking, “switching gears”	The ability to switch between thinking about two different concepts to thinking about multiple concepts simultaneously, or to redirect one’s attention away from one salient object, instruction, or strategy to another.
<b>Critical Thinking</b>	Problem-solving, logic, reflection	The ability to reason, analyze, evaluate, and problem solve.
<b>Cognitive Appraisal/ Reappraisal</b>	Redirecting thoughts	The ability to redirect or reframe thoughts in order to regulate behaviors or emotions.
Emotion Skills		
<b>Emotional Knowledge and Expression</b>	Identifying and predicting emotions, communicating emotions	The ability to recognize, understand, and label emotions in oneself and others (emotion knowledge) and to express one’s feelings in contextually appropriate ways (emotion expression).
<b>Emotional and Behavioral Regulation</b>	Emotion control, self-management, self-control	The ability to regulate the intensity and/or duration of one’s emotions and emotional responses, both positive and negative (emotion regulation) as well as the ability to learn and act in accordance with expectations for appropriate social behavior (behavior regulation).

<b>Empathy/ Perspective Taking</b>	Putting yourself in another's shoes, compassion	The ability to understand another person's emotional state and point of view. This includes identifying, acknowledging, and acting upon the experiences, feelings, and viewpoints of others, whether by placing oneself in another's situation or through the vicarious experiencing of another's emotions.
<b>Social Skills</b>		
<b>Understanding Social Cues</b>	Non-verbal communication	The process through which children interpret cues from their social environment and use them to understand the behaviors of others. For example, reading facial expressions, body language, tone of voice, reading the room; also includes attributions of intent.
<b>Conflict Resolution/ Social Problem Solving</b>	Constructive/ peaceful problem solving	The ability to generate and act on effective strategies or solutions for challenging interpersonal situations and conflicts.
<b>Prosocial/ Cooperative Behavior</b>	Teamwork, inclusion, listening, respect, turn- taking	The skills required to organize and navigate social relationships, including the ability to interact effectively with others and develop positive relationships. Includes a broad range of skills and behaviors such as listening/communication, cooperation, helping, community-building, and being a good friend.
<b>Values</b>		
<b>Ethical Values</b>	Care, respect, generosity, tolerance, sacrifice, forgiveness, honesty, integrity	The values and habits related to a concern for justice, fairness, and the welfare of others that enable one to successfully interact with and care for others according to prosocial norms.
<b>Performance Values</b>	Perseverance, focus, hard work, achievement	The values and habits related to accomplishing tasks, meeting goals, and performing to one's highest potential that enable children to work effectively in accordance with prosocial norms. This includes values relevant to achievement contexts (e.g., school, work, sports, etc.) and ethical contexts (e.g., continuing to do the right thing even in the face of temptation).
<b>Civic Values</b>	Citizenship, community service, social justice, civic participation, peacebuilding	The values and habits related to effectively and responsibly participating in community life and serving the common good. This includes helping others, being an active and engaged member of one's community, and striving to make the world a better and more just place.

<b>Intellectual Values</b>	Love of learning, curiosity, creativity	The values and habits that guide one's approach to the pursuit of knowledge and truth. This includes seeking out new information, investigating the truth, being able to admit error, thinking things through from all sides, and approaching tasks and problems in new and creative ways.
<b>Perspectives</b>		
<b>Optimism</b>	Positive attitude, high expectations	An approach to others, events, or circumstances characterized by a positive attitude and sense of hope about the future and one's ability to impact it.
<b>Gratitude</b>	Thankfulness, appreciation	An approach to others, events, or circumstances characterized by a sense of appreciation for what one has received and/or the things in one's life.
<b>Openness</b>	Adaptiveness, acceptance, curiosity	An approach to others, events (especially those that involve change), circumstances, and ideas characterized by adaptability, responsiveness and/or acceptance.
<b>Enthusiasm/Zest</b>	Excitement, energy	An approach to events or circumstances characterized by an attitude of excitement and energy.
<b>Identity</b>		
<b>Self-Knowledge</b>	Understanding strengths/weaknesses, sense of self, self-awareness	Developing and maintaining a coherent understanding and sense of oneself over time, including personality traits, interests, preferences, strengths, and weaknesses.
<b>Purpose</b>	Goal-orientation, future orientation	The existence of a purpose or drive motivated by something larger than oneself that shapes one's values, goals, behavior, and plans for the future. This includes formulating and pursuing long-term life goals related to education/career, personal passions, and life purpose.
<b>Self-Efficacy/Growth Mindset</b>	High expectations, sense of agency	A belief in one's ability to improve and succeed. This includes believing that improvement is possible with time and effort (i.e. growth mindset), that one has the ability to accomplish a task (i.e. self-confidence), and that one has control of one's options and choices (i.e. agency).
<b>Self-Esteem</b>	Confidence, sense of belonging	A belief in one's own self-worth. This includes feeling a sense of value and belonging as well as engaging in habits like extending kindness and understanding to oneself and having respect for one's body and health.

## RESILIENCE AND RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING

In addition to the skills above, many PSS-SEL resources refer to two important and overarching concepts: resilience and responsible decision-making. These concepts are important to children's development and wellbeing, and they overlap with many of the skills described above, as well as the contextual factors that affect wellbeing described in subsequent pages. Here we offer general descriptions of these overarching concepts.

### Resilience

**Definition:** An outcome that reflects positive adaptation despite experiences of adversity [21]. Resilience is not a trait that a child possesses or is born with; it is an outcome or capacity that develops through the action of protective and promotive factors in the child's environment [21, 22, 23].

**Application:** Resilience is dynamic and situation specific – different people develop resilience differently over time, have different capacities to be resilient, and this can vary across situations. Additionally, systems at various levels – individual, family, and community – interact with one another to build and promote resilience [25]. Therefore, resilience is a complex construct that should be understood and applied in context and not in isolation.

**Connections:** The combination of supportive relationships, adaptive skill building, and positive experiences constitute the foundation for resilience [24]. Resilience overlaps with and builds upon many of the domains and skills listed above, as well as the contextual factors that affect wellbeing described below in pages 19-27.

### Responsible Decision-Making

**Definition:** The ability to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations, while considering ethical standards and safety concerns, and evaluating the benefits and consequences of various actions for personal, social, and collective wellbeing [26].

**Application and Connections:** Responsible decision-making overlaps with many of the domains and skills listed above, for example the cognitive, social, and values domains in particular. It can be understood as a higher-order construct that builds upon skills across multiple domains and often refers to children and youth using these skills in combination in specific contexts and circumstances.

## LEARN ABOUT SKILLS: WELLBEING OVERVIEW & INVENTORY

### WHAT IS WELLBEING?

Many programs in education in emergencies (EiE) emphasize the need to support children's wellbeing. However, there is not general agreement or consistency on what the term wellbeing means. There is consensus, however, around the idea that wellbeing cannot be fully captured by considering only the welfare or the specific social and emotional competencies of the child in isolation, and should instead be defined in relation to multiple contextual factors such as the family, the community, and the macro-level policies and systems that surround each child [27]. A review of wellbeing definitions across the field of PSS-SEL in EiE settings points to five broad contextual factors that affect wellbeing: **ecology, equity, health, safety, and support to adults**. The dynamics within and between these interconnected factors can either promote or hinder children's growth and development.

This view of wellbeing is grounded in bio-ecological and social-ecological models of human development [27, 28, 29], which assert that development is shaped by features of key and influential contexts in which the child lives, learns, and plays with others (e.g., family, community, school, etc.). The specific factors included in this Inventory were identified from desk research on the aspects of children's backgrounds, experiences, and environments that are frequently included in PSS-SEL guidance documents, frameworks, measurement and assessment tools, and other relevant materials.

Figure 1. Social-Ecological Model



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

## CONTEXTUAL FACTORS THAT AFFECT WELLBEING

Below, we describe five broad features of the context that affect the wellbeing of children and youth: ecology, equity, health, safety, and support to adults. These contextual factors include aspects of children's backgrounds, experiences, and environments that impact learning and development.

Understanding and addressing these factors – including how they manifest in specific local settings – can enable PSS-SEL programs, policies, staff trainings, and other initiatives to be more responsive to the multiple needs, opportunities, and conditions of the environment that are relevant to children's learning and development.

See the Wellbeing Inventory (page 24-27) for a detailed description of specific dimensions associated with each contextual factor that affects wellbeing.

Figure 2. Contextual Factors that Affect Wellbeing



This graphic has been designed using resources from [Flaticon.com](https://flaticon.com).

## ECOLOGY

**Definition:** Children’s social networks, relationships, experiences, and resources in the different environments and areas of their lives.

**Application:** Understanding children’s ecology enables us to provide targeted PSS-SEL supports in the areas of their lives where they are most needed, including strengthening protective and promotive factors and addressing risk factors, whether at home, school, in the broader community, or society at-large.

### Key Dimensions:

**Relationships:** e.g., the child has positive role models and supportive caregivers

**Home Lives:** e.g., the child’s family is supportive of their education and growth

**Peers:** e.g., the child has friends who give them a sense of belonging and fun

**Learning Environment:** e.g., the child feels safe and welcome at school

**Community:** e.g., the child has been displaced alongside neighbors from their place of origin who share a language and common identity

**Geographic Location:** e.g., the child lives in a rural area

**Religion<sup>1</sup>:** e.g., the child finds a sense of purpose and belonging in religious practice

**Macro-Level Factors (including cultural and societal factors, and legislation and policies):** e.g., the child lives in a country with universal access to free education

**Inter-Sectorial Partnerships between Various Ecological Levels:** e.g., there are clear referral pathways at school for a child to receive necessary mental health or protection supports

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<sup>1</sup>Religion as a feature of ecology refers to one’s experience with or connection to religion, spirituality, or faith.

## EQUITY

**Definition:** Aspects of children’s identities, backgrounds, and experiences that may give them an advantage or disadvantage in society.

**Application:** Considering the different dimensions of Equity helps us to be aware of and counter discrimination, dismantle systemic injustice or remove specific barriers, and provide more targeted support for children’s wellbeing.

### Key Dimensions

**Gender:** e.g., the child has equitable access to bathrooms at school

**Language:** e.g., the child’s home language is their language of instruction at school

**Socio-Economic Status:** e.g., the child’s family can provide for their basic material needs

**Race, Ethnicity, and Caste:** e.g., the child’s ethnic group is officially recognized by the national government

**Dis/ability:** e.g., the child has access to accommodative services to attend school

**Religion:** e.g., the child is able to freely practice their religion in public

**Nationality:** e.g., the child is a citizen of their country of residence

**Emergency:** e.g., the child has been displaced but has access to mitigating services

**Development:** e.g., the child lives in a community with adequate education facilities for their age group

**Education Access:** e.g., the child lives within reasonable distance of a school they are able to enroll in

**Documentation:** e.g., the child has a birth certificate proving their citizenship



## HEALTH

**Definition:** Different aspects of children’s physical and mental health as well as public health resources. Health is a broad feature of wellbeing that has wide reaching connections to the other contextual factors (e.g., children’s ecology and dimensions of equity) as well as effects on children’s development.

**Application:** It is important to include children’s health-related practices and conditions as well as access to mental health, physical health, and public health resources when considering wellbeing.

### Key Dimensions

**Physical Health:** e.g., the child has received vaccines against major illnesses

**Mental Health:** e.g., the child has access to a mental health counselor at school

**Sexual and Reproductive Health:** e.g., the child or youth will receive comprehensive and culturally appropriate sex education in secondary school

**Nutrition:** e.g., the child’s caregivers provide them with consistent and nutrient-rich meals

**Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene:** e.g., the child has access to a sanitary toilet at school

## SAFETY

**Definition:** Children’s actual or perceived safety, often related to issues of child protection.

**Application:** Children and youth must feel safe in order to learn and grow. It is important to include children’s safety at home, school, in community settings, and within the broader social or political context when considering wellbeing.

### Key Dimensions

**Physical Safety:** e.g., the child can play outside without fear of violence

**Psychosocial Safety:** e.g., the child feels safe and loved at home and school

**Bullying:** e.g., the child knows they can report incidents of bullying to a trusted adult and it will be addressed

**Sexual and Gender-Based Violence:** e.g., the child feels comfortable walking to school alone

## SUPPORT TO ADULTS

**Definition:** Support that is offered to or required for teachers, educators, or other caregivers, about either their own psychosocial/social and emotional wellbeing or supporting children’s psychosocial/social and emotional wellbeing.

**Application:** Adults, including educators and caregivers, play a critical role in fostering children’s wellbeing, and it is important to consider necessary and available supports for the adults in children’s lives. Adult support may take the form of professional development, training and coaching materials, resources, or other forms of support related to PSS and/or SEL.

### Key Dimensions

**Support to Adults:** e.g., the child’s caregivers have a trusted community elder they can ask for advice about supporting their child and/or the child’s teacher receives specific training on supporting students’ psychosocial wellbeing and their own wellbeing as teachers

Note: Support to Adults includes supports aimed at fostering both adults’ and children’s wellbeing offered through various delivery mechanisms such as community services, trainings, resources, professional development opportunities, etc.

## Wellbeing Inventory:

### 30 Contextual Factors that Affect Wellbeing of Children and Youth

Ecology	
<b>Home</b>	Refers to a child's home environment, including the space where they live, the people they live with and the activities they engage in at home. Specific dimensions of the home include practices and beliefs within the home that support or hinder children's development and education, such as parenting styles, education-related activities that take place in the home, and beliefs and attitudes about education or parenting.
<b>Peers</b>	Refers to a child's peers, including interactions between and support networks among peers or friends.
<b>Learning Environment</b>	Refers to children's classroom, school or learning environment at large, including non-formal and informal education spaces as well as formal schools. While this is categorized under "ecology," it has particularly significant equity implications in terms of children's quality of education. This dimension captures the resources available in the school or learning environment. Additionally, Learning Environment encompasses teacher practices, which refer to the specific strategies that teachers use in their classrooms, including pedagogical, discipline, and classroom management strategies. Lastly, it captures teacher characteristics which may impact teacher effectiveness or how they are perceived by children, family, and community members (e.g., certification, years of experience, etc.), including teachers' attitudes about their school, role, and students.
<b>Community</b>	Refers to the larger community environment outside of the home and school, including the resources available in a child's community (e.g., community or youth centers, parks, libraries, access to services, etc.).
<b>Geographic Location</b>	Refers to geographic location including state, region, district, country, village, city, or setting (e.g., urban, rural, inner-city, etc.).
<b>Relationships</b>	Refers to the relationships between a child and others. Relationships can be considered in terms of the ecological level specific to the relationship (e.g., a nurturing relationship between the child and their caregiver in the home, or between the child and their teacher in the learning environment).
<b>Religion</b>	Refers to a child's affiliation to, or experience with religion, spirituality, and/or faith. Religion can be considered in terms of the ecological level specific to the religious connection (e.g., home, learning environment, community, etc.).
<b>Macrosystem</b>	Refers to macrosystem influences on a child's development and wellbeing, such as societal and cultural influences on the child's development (beyond what happens in their family unit/home or specific community) or

	laws and policies that affect children in a given context. This also captures issues of acculturation, such as a refugee child having to adapt from their home culture to their host culture.
<b>Partnerships</b>	Refers to institutional connections between various ecological levels or sectors that support children's holistic development, including cross-sectorial integration or connection of services such as mental health services incorporated into basic health or education services, and family-school partnerships.
<b>Equity</b>	
<b>Gender</b>	Refers to aspects of gender that shape experience, such as gender roles, or differences in expectations and/or treatment of children or youth based on their gender.
<b>Language</b>	Refers to a child's mother tongue and languages spoken at home and/or at school. This captures whether the child is in the majority or minority language group in the community and at school, as well as whether the child speaks different languages at home, or whether certain languages may be prioritized over others.
<b>Socio-Economic Status (SES)</b>	Refers to a family or child's socio-economic status, including resources available in the home (physical or financial), as well as the family or child/youth's income, educational attainment, and occupation.
<b>Race, Ethnicity, and Caste</b>	Refers to a child's race, ethnicity, or caste, including identifiers such as white, black, etc.; tribal or caste affiliation; or other ethnic identities.
<b>Dis/ability</b>	Refers to differentiated needs or abilities, including specific dis/abilities such as Autism, Deaf/Mute, Poor Vision/Visually Impaired/Blind, intellectual or physical disabilities, or other developmental delays or conditions that may affect children's learning. This dimension is often seen in conjunction with teacher practices where materials refer to differentiated or inclusive instruction and/or supporting learners with dis/abilities.
<b>Religion</b>	Refers to a child's religious affiliation or experience with religion particularly where social division or discrimination along religious lines is considered (e.g., religious minority or majority status).
<b>Nationality</b>	Refers to a child's nationality and/or citizenship status.
<b>Emergency</b>	Refers to a child's exposure to conflict and crisis, defined broadly but including armed conflict, political instability, natural disasters, etc., as well as displacement from homes or communities, as in the case of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDP), as well as forced migration. This also applies to issues of custody and adoption facing orphans and other vulnerable children.

<b>Development</b>	Refers to a child's developmental stage and captures thinking about developmental changes or transitions throughout the life span, including the developmental progression of targeted social and emotional competencies.
<b>Education Access</b>	Refers to a child's access to education (including access to vocational training), and includes references to interrupted education and absences as well as children's access to early learning opportunities, including early childhood education, pre-primary, etc.
<b>Documentation</b>	Refers to possession of/access to a child's documentation (e.g., birth certificates, residency permits, passports, refugee cards, school diplomas, etc.).
<b>Health</b>	
<b>Physical Health</b>	Refers to a child's physical health (e.g., access to health clinics, specific illnesses a child may have, how many days a child missed school due to illness, etc.).
<b>Mental Health</b>	Refers to a child's psychological well-being, including mentions of distress, symptoms of anxiety or depression, and associated mental health responses.
<b>Sexual and Reproductive Health</b>	Refers to a child's or youth's practices around sexual and reproductive health, including access to and experiences with sexual education and access to contraception.
<b>Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)</b>	Refers to a child's hygiene habits (e.g., hand washing) as well as their access to potable water.
<b>Nutritional Health</b>	Refers to a child's diet and nutrition, including eating habits and frequency of meals as well as access to healthful foods. This also captures references to hunger or food scarcity.
<b>Safety</b>	
<b>Psychosocial Safety</b>	Refers to aspects of a child's safety that are not necessarily physically threatening, but may cause psychological distress (e.g., verbal abuse, threats, discrimination, prolonged or severe stress, etc.).
<b>Physical Safety</b>	Refers to a child's physical safety, including specific risks to physical safety such as violence, land mines, terrorist attacks, fire and other natural disasters, prevalence of weapons, etc. This can also refer to interpersonal violence, such as engaging in fights at school.
<b>Bullying</b>	Refers to physical attacks or actions by a peer that are intended to injure, embarrass, or instill fear in the victim, including threats without physical harm, cyberbullying, intentionally embarrassing another child, etc.

<b>Sexual Violence</b>	Refers to sexual and/or gender-based violence, including issues of sexual harassment.
<b>Support to Adults</b>	
<b>Support to Adults</b>	Refers to support that is offered to or required for teachers or other caregivers (e.g., child protection staff) regarding either their own psychosocial/social-emotional wellbeing or supporting children’s psychosocial/social-emotional wellbeing. This may be referred to as professional development, training, coaching, materials, resources, or other forms of support.

## LEARN ABOUT SKILLS: REFLECTION GUIDE

This worksheet is designed to help you reflect on the specific SEL skills and contextual factors that affect wellbeing that are included in the Inventory, and how they may be influenced by cultural values or norms. You can do this reflection individually, as a team, or with input from other stakeholders. Refer to the **Community Engagement Activity Guide** on page 31 for ideas on engaging stakeholder input.

### REFLECTION GUIDE: SEL SKILLS

**Review the SEL Skills Inventory on page 14-17:**

- Circle the skills that are most important or valued in your setting.
- Place an X next to skills that do not make sense to you, do not seem relevant, or do not seem appropriate for your setting.
- Consider any skills that are important to your setting but are not included in the guide.

**Which skills are important in your setting?** From the skills you circled, write the 5 skills you find most important in the space below and why you think they are important.

Important Skill	Reason for Importance
<i>Example: Conflict Resolution</i>	<i>Example: In our context, we have a big problem with learners fighting at school, which reflects the violence in their communities.</i>

**What skills could be changed or added to reflect your setting?** Think about which skills, if any, are important in your setting that are not included or represented appropriately in the inventory. You can refer to the Explore SEL Thesaurus at <http://exploresel.gse.harvard.edu/terms/> for more SEL terms and definitions.

Skill or term to add or change	Reason for Addition or Change
<i>Example: Self Control</i>	<i>Example: In our context we commonly use the word "self control" instead of "inhibitory control"</i>



## REFLECTION GUIDE: WELLBEING

Review the Wellbeing Inventory on page 24-27:

- Circle the contextual factors that are most important or valued in your setting.
- Place an X next to contextual factors that do not make sense to you, do not seem relevant, or do not seem appropriate for your setting.
- Consider any contextual factors that are important to wellbeing in your setting but not included in the guide.

**Which contextual factors that affect wellbeing are important in your setting?** Write the 5 contextual factors you find most important in the space below and why you think they are important.

Contextual Factor	Reason for Importance
<i>Example: Physical safety and Emergency</i>	<i>Example: The biggest threat to children's wellbeing in our context is armed conflict in their community</i>

**What contextual factors that affect wellbeing could be changed or added to reflect your setting?** Think about which contextual factors, if any, are important in your setting that are not included or represented appropriately in the inventory.

Contextual Factor to add or change	Reason for Addition or Change
<i>Example: Socio-economic status</i>	<i>The definition of socio-economic status should be revised to include class to reflect our setting</i>

## REFLECTION GUIDE: FINAL THOUGHTS

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Consider the following questions for the next steps in your work:

- What skills and descriptions are most important to or relevant to your context?
- What skills and descriptions reflect children’s everyday behavior in your context?
- What skills and descriptions reflect the needs of or challenges for children in your context?
- What skills and descriptions reflect the goals or hopes for children in your context?
- Do these skills and descriptions reflect the values, norms, expectations, and ways of thinking, interacting, and communicating that are important in your context?

Use the space below to document your reflections:

## ANNEX: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES GUIDE

Community engagement is central to localization: engaging the ideas, perspectives, and opinions of stakeholders in your community will support your work to address their assets, needs, and priorities. This guide includes some ideas for activities to engage stakeholders in collecting this information through participatory and inclusive activities. These activities are meant to be illustrative examples that you can adapt, combine, or use to design other locally appropriate community engagement strategies.

### EXAMPLE ACTIVITIES

**Focus Group Discussions:** Facilitators lead a discussion on key issues or questions. Groups can be composed of one stakeholder group or be a mix of different stakeholders.

**Community Meetings:** Facilitators work with community leaders to hold discussions with community members about key issues as part of local activities such as town hall meetings.

**Key Informant Interviews:** Enumerators engage experts or representatives of different stakeholder groups in conversation about key issues or questions.

**Community Mapping:** Participants sketch a map of their community identifying the physical, social, and environmental assets and needs/challenges. Community mapping can be particularly useful when working with children and youth.

**Surveys:** Participants write out responses to written questions. Surveys can be particularly useful when participants cannot gather or are reviewing written materials independently, however it requires that all participants are literate.

**Home or School Visits:** Enumerators observe participants in their typical environment. Home/school visits can work well in combination with direct feedback channels and/or when field testing resources.

Key Issues and Considerations		
<b>EQUITY &amp; INCLUSION</b> Before conducting any community engagement activities, ensure that your process is representative and inclusive of diverse stakeholders in your context, including marginalized groups such as children and people with disabilities.  Read more at <a href="https://inee.org/collections/inclusive-education">https://inee.org/collections/inclusive-education</a> .	<b>DO NO HARM</b> Consider and mitigate any potential negative impacts of conducting community engagement activities that could exacerbate local tensions or trigger conflict.  Read more at <a href="https://inee.org/resources/do-no-harm-toward-contextually-appropriate-psychosocial-support-international-emergencies">https://inee.org/resources/do-no-harm-toward-contextually-appropriate-psychosocial-support-international-emergencies</a> .	<b>PRIVACY AND CONSENT</b> All participants should be fully informed of how their inputs and information will be used in the activity and allowed to opt out at any time. Any identifying information should be anonymized.  Refer to your organization's privacy, consent, and safeguarding protocols and policies.

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## ABOUT THE TOOLBOX

This tool is part of a Toolbox that can be found online at <http://inee.exploresel.gse.harvard.edu>

The PSS-SEL Toolbox is a collaboration between the EASEL Lab and the Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE). The Toolbox is designed to support stakeholders working on psychosocial support (PSS) and social emotional learning (SEL) in education in emergency settings. For more information, please contact: **Rachel Smith, INEE PSS-SEL Coordinator**, [rachel.smith@inee.org](mailto:rachel.smith@inee.org)

### The EASEL Lab

The Ecological Approaches to Social Emotional Learning (EASEL) Laboratory is located at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. The EASEL Lab's work is focused on exploring the effects of high-quality social emotional interventions on the development and achievement of children, youth, teachers, parents, and communities. Our projects aim to advance the field of SEL through research, practice, and policy. The EASEL Lab also effects change through field-building projects, which work to strengthen the links between SEL evidence, policy, and practice by facilitating greater clarity, transparency, and precision in the field.

For more information about the EASEL Lab, please visit: <http://easel.gse.harvard.edu>

### INEE PSS-SEL Collaborative

The INEE PSS-SEL Collaborative is co-chaired by Silvia Diazgranados Ferrans and Julia Finder Johna. Rachel Smith is the PSS-SEL Coordinator at INEE. For more information about the PSS-SEL Collaborative, please visit <https://inee.org/collaboratives/pss-sel>

## PSS-SEL TOOLBOX

### Learn About Skills

June 2022

Developed by the EASEL Lab at Harvard University  
In partnership with the INEE PSS-SEL Collaborative



**Inter-agency  
Network for Education  
in Emergencies**



**EASEL**  
lab

# PRIORITIZE FOR LOCAL CONTEXT

**A localizing process to identify priorities and determine next steps in your setting. Use this tool to reflect on local needs and key documents, and make a plan for how to prioritize and organize PSS-SEL skills and concepts for your work.**

## Overview

This tool guides you through a four-step process designed to align local needs with the PSS-SEL skills and concepts explored on this site and/or in key guiding documents, and to make a plan for how to prioritize and organize them in your work. The four steps in this process are:



## Why is it important?

Each program, organization, or context has unique needs and interests that shape how PSS-SEL skills and concepts are prioritized. This tool helps you consider your local needs in addition to other important inputs and use that information to determine priorities and next steps in your work. Engaging in these steps ensures that your work in PSS-SEL is aligned to local needs as well as the relevant terms and definitions currently used in the field.

## How can you use it?

Use this four-part exercise to reflect on and align: (a) the needs of your setting, (b) the skills and concepts that are most relevant to your work, (c) the existing frameworks and terms that are most relevant to the goals, values, and norms of your context, and (d) other literature, resources, or research that informs your PSS-SEL work. This tool helps you refine definitions for key PSS-SEL concepts in your setting, and organize them effectively to guide your work. These may serve as the basis for local frameworks, curriculum, or other tools that are aligned to your prioritization objectives.



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# ABOUT THE PSS-SEL TOOLBOX

The PSS-SEL Toolbox is a collaboration between the EASEL Lab and the Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE). The Toolbox is designed to support stakeholders working on psychosocial support (PSS) and social emotional learning (SEL) in education in emergency settings. It includes 4 Localizing Tools that can be used individually or in combination.

- Use **Learn About Skills** to review the field of PSS-SEL and peruse an inventory of 24 SEL skills and 30 contextual factors that affect the wellbeing of children and youth
- Use **Identify Local Needs and Assets** to engage local community members to determine the most important PSS-SEL needs in your setting
- Use **Prioritize for Local Context** to reflect on local PSS-SEL priorities, organize and define key concepts in alignment with local objectives, and plan for next steps in your setting
- Use **Validate for Local Context** to examine and revise the relevance and fit of your PSS-SEL work with feedback from local community members



You can find all the tools, as well as guidance on using them, interactive data tools to support localization, and other resources at <http://inee.exploresel.gse.harvard.edu/localizing-tools>.

## Additional Considerations and Resources

The guidance and resources in this toolbox may be supplemented with additional training and information around key issues, including the following.

**Conflict Sensitivity and Do No Harm:** Approaches to education and other programming in conflict contexts that seek to prevent or mitigate negative impacts and promote positive impacts on local dynamics.

Learn more at <https://inee.org/collections/conflict-sensitive-education>.

**Gender Equity and Social Inclusion:** Ensuring that all people, including members of excluded or marginalized groups have equitable access to full participation and representation in all aspects of programming.

Learn more at <https://inee.org/collections/inclusive-education> and <https://inee.org/collections/gender>.

**PSS-SEL Collection:** Resources, trainings, and research on PSS-SEL programming in education in emergencies contexts. Materials support quality design, implementation and monitoring of PSS and SEL programs.

Learn more at <https://inee.org/collections/psychosocial-support-and-social-and-emotional-learning>.

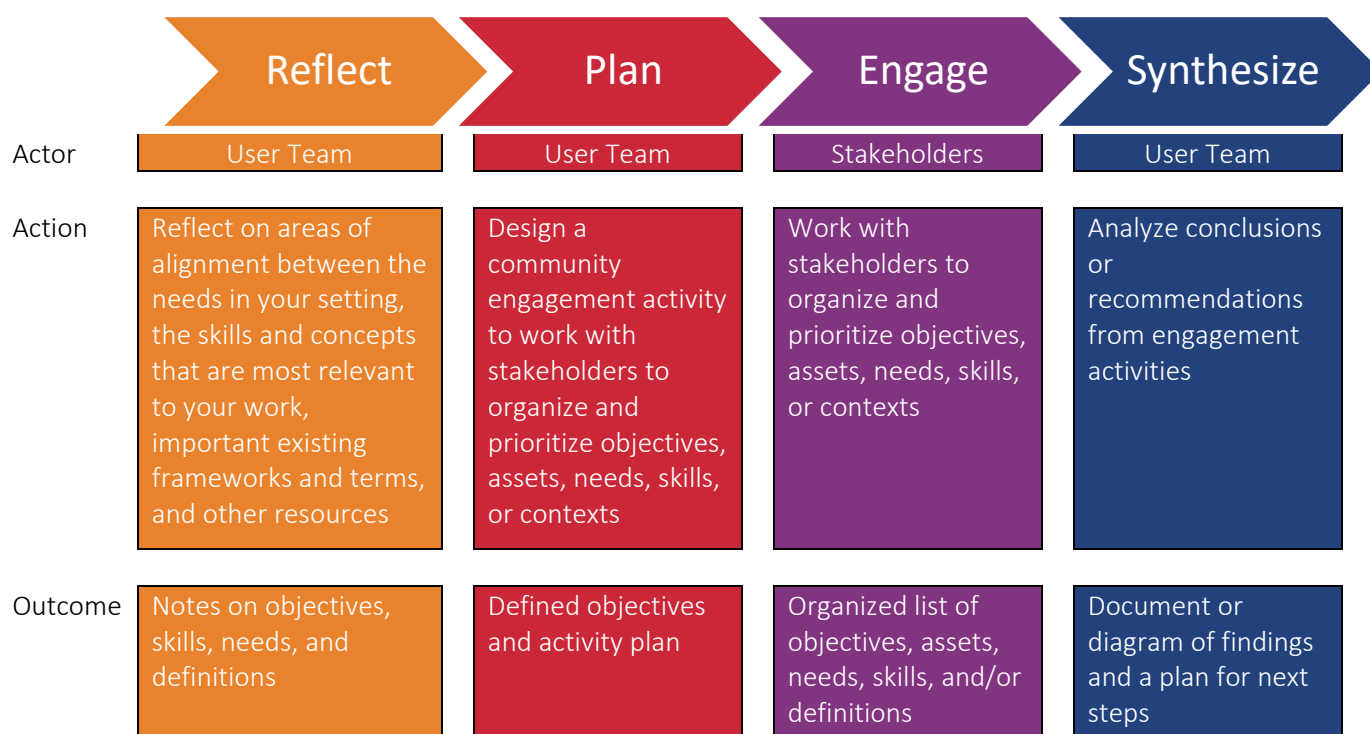
**Teacher Wellbeing:** Approaches that recognize educators and other practitioners as beneficiaries alongside their learners and addresses their needs and perspectives in programming.

Learn more at <https://inee.org/collections/teacher-wellbeing>.

## PRIORITIZE: INTRODUCTION

This tool includes guiding questions to help you align, prioritize, and organize SEL skills and contextual factors that affect wellbeing as they relate to your specific context as well as broader prioritization objectives you may have. Use the four-step process to:

1. **REFLECT** on the information you have about your contexts, assets and needs
2. **PLAN** by deciding what your prioritization objectives are, what information you need to achieve them, and how you will collect and incorporate stakeholders' perspectives
3. **ENGAGE** stakeholders to organize and prioritize objectives, needs, assets, skills, or contexts
4. **SYNTHESIZE** your learning to facilitate next steps in your work with a framework, hierarchy, or other document communicating priorities, including a set of considerations and guidance for using the identified priorities to inform your work going forward



### What's inside?

Summary of the four steps.....	Page 5
<b>REFLECT:</b> Instructions and Worksheet.....	Page 6-12
<b>PLAN:</b> Instructions and Worksheet.....	Page 13-17
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<b>SYNTHESIZE:</b> Instructions and Worksheet.....	Page 21-24
ANNEX: Community Engagement Guide and Additional Resources....	Page 25

## 1. REFLECT

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In the first part of the exercise, you will **reflect** on the SEL skills and contextual factors that affect wellbeing that are important in your setting – based on your local needs, assets, and goals; existing frameworks that are relevant to your context; and other resources that inform your PSS-SEL work. You will explore areas of **alignment** across the concepts you have identified as important. If you completed the worksheets in the **Identify Local**

**Needs and Assets Tool**, it will be helpful to reference what you documented there. Or, if you have engaged in similarly consultative processes to identify local needs and assets with a range of stakeholders, refer to that information. By aligning the concepts that are important in your setting with those prioritized by other relevant resources and initiatives, you will be better positioned to find synergies between your work and the work of others.

Engaging in this systematic alignment process will help ensure greater transparency and cohesion between PSS-SEL approaches, while maintaining important local and/or cultural variation, across the field of EiE.

### What are some examples of prioritization objectives?

- If your goal is to create or adapt a SEL skills framework, your objective may be a **ranked list of SEL skills organized by domain**
- If your goal is to create or adapt SEL curriculum, your objective may be to **map existing curriculum or resources to your SEL needs** and identify any gaps
- If your goal is to develop a SEL policy, your objective may be a list of primary policy goals or beneficiaries
- If your goal is to design a SEL assessment system, your objective may be a **list of SEL assessment tools that align with your domains of interest**

## 2. PLAN

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In the second step, you will decide what your **prioritization objectives** are and then design a community engagement activity to work with stakeholders to collect their input to achieve those prioritization objectives. Preparations include considering the expected role, perspectives, and expertise of each stakeholder group as well as ways to include and balance different or disagreeing voices.

## 3. ENGAGE

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In the third step, you will conduct the community engagement activity and record your findings.

## 4. SYNTHESIZE

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In the last section, you will analyze the information from the engagement activities with the goal of understanding stakeholder priorities. You will create conclusions and recommendations in line with your objectives, and you will organize the findings for your work. This will support your next steps towards your objective, such as creating a skills framework, designing curriculum or instructional materials, writing a policy, or developing SEL measurements.

## STEP 1: REFLECT

### WHAT ARE WE PRIORITIZING? DEFINING PRIORITIZATION OBJECTIVES

Consider what your overall localizing goals are in relation to the needs and assets of your context: what choices do you need to make to prioritize, organize, and plan in order to meet your localization goals? Your overall goals will define what you need to prioritize.

#### Prioritization Examples

- **Framework:** If your goal is to create or adapt a SEL skills framework, your prioritization objective may be a ranked list of **SEL skills** organized by domain
- **Curriculum:** If your goal is to create or adapt SEL curriculum, your prioritization objective may be to map existing **curriculum or resources** to your SEL needs and identify any gaps
- **Program Design:** If your goal is to design or localize a program, your prioritization objective may be to identify key **program outcomes, beneficiaries, or approaches**.
- **Policy:** If your goal is to develop a SEL policy, your prioritization objective may be a list of primary **policy goals or beneficiaries**
- **Measures:** If your goal is to use or design a SEL assessment system, your prioritization objective may be a list of **SEL assessment tools** that align with your domains (skill areas) of interest

See the **User Pathways Guidance** for additional information on using the Localizing Tools.

### INTRODUCTION TO REFLECTION

In order to decide your prioritization objectives for your context, you will need to reflect on:

- a) the needs of your setting,
- b) the skills and concepts that are most relevant to your work,
- c) the existing frameworks and terms that guide your work, and
- d) other literature, resources, or research that inform your PSS-SEL work.

There are many ways to approach the exercises below: use the [Identify Local Needs and Assets](#) Tool to identify needs and assets, use the [Data Tools](#) to review frameworks that are most relevant to your setting, and/or use information and insights from your previous work. Additionally, you can use reflection activities individually or as a user team, such as:

- **Small group discussion:** Read each question aloud and invite team members to share their ideas. Take notes on a board or flipchart for everyone to see.
- **Visualization:** A facilitator reads each question aloud. Team members close their eyes and visualize their response. Members can share their ideas after each question or at the end.
- **Think/pair/share:** Team members sit with a partner. After a facilitator reads each question, each member thinks for one minute, then discusses their ideas with their partner for a minute, and then shares what they discussed with the group.
- **Gallery walk:** Write each question on a big piece of paper and post them around the room. Team members walk around the room and take turns writing responses to each question.

## REFLECT: LOCAL NEEDS AND ASSETS

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For a systematic process to identify needs and assets in your setting, please see the [Identify Local Needs and Assets](#) Tool. Ideally, you will consult with a range of stakeholders to collect this information.

However, if consultation with stakeholders is not possible, reflect on local needs, strengths, and goals based on your own understanding of and experiences in your context and the goals of your work, keeping locally relevant examples in mind. In identifying local needs and assets, it is critically important to keep your and your team's positionalities in mind. Positionality is the idea that "people are defined not in terms of fixed identities, but by their location within shifting networks of relationships, which can be analyzed and changed<sup>1</sup>". As such, it is important for your team to take into account their own social positions in conducting this work and be aware of how that might influence identifying needs and assets *without* having consulted the communities for whom this work is intended. Consider the following questions and write your responses below.

- Who are the intended group(s) your objective seeks to serve?
- What skills do children and youth need to succeed in your setting?
- What does "success" look like in this setting?
- Thinking about how the current education system and learning environments support children and youth in your setting, what are the strengths, and what are areas for growth?
- What is important to consider in your context when thinking about PSS-SEL-related work (e.g., specific crises and resulting needs; specific cultural values, norms, or practices)?
- What are the specific goals and intended outcomes of your work?
- What are the specific goals that parents/caregivers and educators have for learners? What specific goals do learners have for themselves?
- What are the current gaps or challenges you are trying to address?

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<sup>1</sup> Maher, F. A., & Tetreault, M. K. T. (2001) p164. *The feminist classroom: Dynamics of gender, race, and privilege* (Expanded ed.). New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

## REFLECT: SEL SKILLS AND CONTEXTUAL FACTORS THAT AFFECT WELLBEING

Prioritization requires engaging stakeholders to understand the needs and assets around SEL and wellbeing in your context. The [Identify Local Needs and Assets](#) localizing tool provides guidance and resources on a participatory process to engage stakeholders in gathering and synthesizing the information about needs and assets you will use throughout the prioritization process.

You may also refer to the full list of SEL Skills and Contextual Factors that Affect Wellbeing in the [Learn About Skills](#) Tool to learn about specific SEL skills and contextual factors that are tied to positive outcomes for children and youth. For additional SEL terms and definitions, use the **Data Tools Thesaurus** at [inee.exploresel.gse.harvard.edu/thesaurus](http://inee.exploresel.gse.harvard.edu/thesaurus). For additional Wellbeing terms and definitions, use the **Compare Wellbeing** Tool at [exploresel.gse.harvard.edu](http://exploresel.gse.harvard.edu).

If you completed the exercises in [Identify Local Needs and Assets](#), you may refer to your responses on page 18. You may also engage stakeholders directly in this step, or use your own knowledge of and experience in your context. Consider the following questions and write your responses in the chart below:

- What **SEL skills** are most relevant, important, and/or valued in your work in your setting? What local asset or need is each skill addressing?
- What **SEL skills** are most relevant, important, and/or valued in the communities, homes, and learning environments in your setting? What local asset or need is each skill addressing?
- What **contextual factors that affect wellbeing** are most relevant, important, and/or valued in your work in your setting? What local asset or need is this contextual factor addressing?
- What **contextual factors that affect wellbeing** are most relevant, important, and/or valued in the communities, homes, and education settings in your setting? What local asset or need is this contextual factor addressing?

SEL skill, value, attitude, or behavior or dimension of wellbeing	Context: Local asset or need
<i>Communication</i>	<i>Understanding and working with peers and teachers at school</i>
<i>Community solidarity</i>	<i>Fighting at school</i>

## REFLECT: PSS-SEL FRAMEWORKS AND TERMS

Use the **Data Tools** to explore existing frameworks, terms, programs, and resources that may be relevant to your work at <http://inee.exploresel.gse.harvard.edu/data-tools/>:

- Use [Look Inside Frameworks](#) to find frameworks and programs that may be relevant to your context based on region, country, age group, and emergency status.
- Use [Compare Frameworks](#) to view two frameworks side-by-side and identify connections between them, including when frameworks target similar skills but use different terms.
- Use [Compare Domains](#) to visualize and sort frameworks by how much they emphasize a particular SEL domain relevant to your context. Use the filters to find frameworks designed for contexts that share characteristics with yours.
- Use [Compare Terms](#) to see where specific SEL domains or skills appear and how they are organized across different frameworks.
- Use [Compare Wellbeing](#) to visualize and sort frameworks by how much they emphasize a particular feature of wellbeing relevant to your context.

Once you have identified a few programs that include skills or frameworks relevant to your work, use the links on the right side of each program's page on [Look Inside Frameworks](#) to see what resources they have available that may be useful to your work, such as a skills framework diagram, policy or curricular guidance, or instructional materials. Consider what resources are available open-source or for free, what languages they are available in, and if there are versions adapted for or already in use in your context.

Take notes below on the programs you find that may have relevant resources:

Program Name and Organization	Available Resources	Areas of Alignment: SEL skills, contextual factors that affect wellbeing, areas of focus, or shared context



## REFLECT: OTHER RESOURCES

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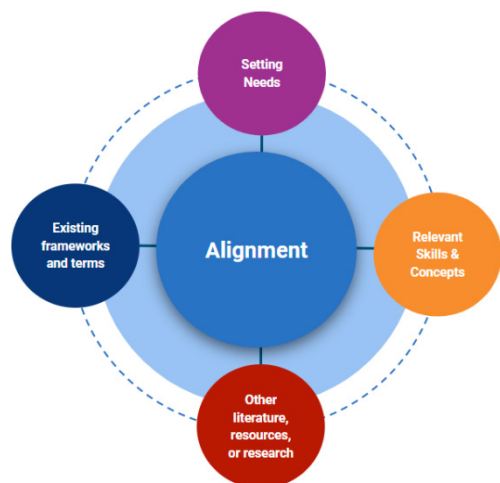
There may be additional resources to consult as you think about how to prioritize skills for your context. These could include national standards or other locally developed documents, influential global or regional documents, or certain areas of literature (e.g., mental health, peace education, workforce development, etc.). You could also consult a specific organization, ministry, or person with special experience or expertise.

- What additional resources or stakeholders should you consult?
- What resources or expertise might they contribute?
- How does this resource or expertise align to your work and context?

Program Name, Organization, Ministry, or Stakeholder	Available Resources or Expertise	Areas of Alignment: SEL skills, contextual factors that affect wellbeing, areas of focus, or shared context

## REFLECT: ALIGNMENT

Identify areas of alignment across the specific needs of your setting, the SEL skills and contextual factors that affect wellbeing that are most relevant to your work, the terms and definitions from other frameworks that are related to your work, and any additional resources. Consider the following questions, and write your ideas about alignment below.



- Are there areas of overlap or similarity among the skills and concepts you listed?
- Are there any skills, goals, or outcomes you identified in “Local Needs” that are not captured by the terms or concepts you listed? If so, are they *related* or *connected* to any other skills, even if they are not exactly aligned?
- When you look across your responses above (page 7-10) what skills, concepts, or terms appear consistently in your reflections? What is unique, distinct, or not well-aligned?
- Is there anything missing that should be included to reflect your local context?

## REFLECT: PSS-SEL TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Consider the skills and concepts you listed above, and the areas of alignment you identified to write a definition for each one. Your definition should be locally relevant and meaningful, so it might be different than the one in other frameworks. If you completed the worksheet in the [Use the Data Localizing Tool](#), it may be helpful to reference what you documented there. You can refer to the [Thesaurus](#) tool for more ideas on definitions. If needed, revise the terms or definitions from these existing resources to better align them with local needs, values, and the experiences of children and youth in your context.

As you consider how to consolidate your learning, keep the following guiding principles in mind to ensure that your work is:

- (a) **Concrete** – describes what one should expect to see in children’s (and adults’) behavior or within the learning environment, and provides a set of short- and long-term outcomes;
- (b) **Clear** – uses terminology that is both transparent and linked in precise ways to measurements/assessments, frameworks, and/or strategies and practices;
- (c) **Developmental** – describes what is salient (i.e., new or emerging) at different developmental periods and links concepts and constructs to age-specific opportunities and tasks; and
- (d) **Contextual** – reflects the values, norms, and expectations for children or youth in the local setting and focuses on constructs that are relevant to the specific context.

Skill or Feature of Wellbeing	Draft Definition

## STEP 2: PLAN

### PLAN: CONSIDER PRIORITIZATION OBJECTIVES

---

Consider the following questions and write the answers in the boxes below. See the examples on the following page for ideas.

What is the desired **outcome** of your prioritization process? In other words, using the information you currently have about PSS-SEL in your context, what do you need to prioritize, understand, or decide in order to meet your organization's goals?

What **decisions** do you need to make to achieve your desired outcome?

What additional **information or perspectives** do you need to consider to make those decisions?

What **stakeholders** have expertise or perspectives that will help you make those decisions?

What **guiding principles** will help you move forward if stakeholders disagree or hold conflicting perspectives? Give special consideration to what you will do if you, your team, or organization hold perspectives that differ from stakeholder perspectives.

## Examples: Identifying Prioritization Objectives (by Localization Goal)

What is the desired **outcome** of your prioritization process? In other words, using the information you currently have about PSS-SEL in your context, what do you need to prioritize, understand, or decide in order to meet your organization's goals?

Localization Goal	Example Prioritization Outcome
Create or adapt an <i>SEL skills framework</i>	Ranked list of SEL skills organized by domain
Create or adapt SEL <i>curriculum</i>	Curriculum mapping exercise to align curricula, resources, or approaches to your objectives, identify gaps, and analyze options to fill gaps
Design an SEL <i>policy</i>	Document identifying policy objectives, gaps, and remaining questions
Design an SEL <i>program</i>	Document planning and defining key objectives and intervention approaches for the program
Find relevant SEL <i>measures</i>	List of SEL competencies that you want to assess matched with list of SEL measures organized by domain or other category

What **decisions** do you need to make to achieve your desired outcome?

Localization Goal	Example Decisions
Create or adapt an <i>SEL skills framework</i>	Most important SEL skills organized by domain
Create or adapt SEL <i>curriculum</i>	Existing curricular resources you want to use, gaps you want to fill, and how to fill them
Design an SEL <i>policy</i>	Most important policy objectives or target beneficiaries
Design an SEL <i>program</i>	Main program objectives and ways to achieve them
Find relevant SEL <i>measures</i>	Most relevant SEL measures for your program's objectives and context

What additional **information or perspectives** do you need to make those decisions?

Localization Goal	Example Information or Perspectives
Create or adapt an <i>SEL skills framework</i>	What skills are most relevant to different stakeholders?
Create or adapt SEL <i>curriculum</i>	What resources do educators most need or want?
Design an SEL <i>policy</i>	What needs are not being addressed by current policies?
Design an SEL <i>program</i>	What objectives do beneficiaries see as important?
Find relevant SEL <i>measures</i>	What measures reflect local understandings of SEL?

## Example

**Examples: Identifying Prioritization Objectives (by Localization Goal)**

What **stakeholders** have expertise or perspectives that will help you make those decisions?

*Example Stakeholders: Learners, caregivers, educators, school administrators, ministry officials, experts and advisors, curriculum designers, monitoring and evaluation teams, NGO staff*

What **guiding principles** will help you choose between perspectives if stakeholders disagree or hold conflicting perspectives? Give special considerations to what you will do if you, your team, or organization hold different perspectives than stakeholders.

- *We will listen to, respect, and value every stakeholder's input.*
- *We should deliberately make space and time for stakeholders from traditionally marginalized groups to share their input.*
- *We should defer to the expertise of members of the community and stakeholders who work most directly with learners.*
- *Decisionmakers and/or stakeholders of higher status (ministry officials, project managers, etc.) should listen to and consider the contributions of others.*
- *If we disagree, we should each share the reasoning for our perspective.*
- *We should always seek to come to a consensus as a group.*
- *If consensus cannot be reached, we take a vote and majority rules.*

## PLAN: PREPARE STAKEHOLDER INPUT

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Identify the stakeholders you will engage in making prioritization decisions. Note the expertise, priorities, perspectives, or blind spots you expect each stakeholder group to bring to your conversations.

Stakeholder Group	Role in PSS-SEL Activities	Anticipated Expertise, Priorities, or Perspectives

Consider this information about stakeholders and your responses about guiding principles on the previous page. What are your ideas for the engagement activities, questions, or approaches that will help you include and balance the voices of all stakeholders?

## PLAN: DESIGN ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Using the list of stakeholders and engagement strategies, fill out the charts below. It can be one unified activity for all stakeholders, or multiple smaller activities depending on your setting. This guide provides protocols for conducting a SEL skills mapping activity, but you can use any engagement activity that is appropriate for that stakeholder in your setting and that fits your prioritization objectives. You can expand these planning charts or plan for more than three groups on separate paper. Refer to the **Community Engagement Activity Guide** on page 25 for more ideas.

Stakeholder Group	Location or institution	Type of Engagement
<i>Educators</i>	<i>Cambridge Primary School 14C</i>	<i>Skills mapping workshop</i>
<b>Planning Notes</b> <i>Request permission from head teacher to conduct the activity during the next monthly staff meeting (always takes place on 1<sup>st</sup> Monday of the month)</i> <i>Send an email reminder to all teachers the day before</i> <i>Bring flipchart paper and markers</i> <i>Ask teachers to bring their laptops or phones to access the data tools during the activity</i>		

Stakeholder Group	Location or institution	Type of Engagement
<b>Planning Notes</b>		
Stakeholder Group	Location or institution	Type of Engagement
<b>Planning Notes</b>		
Stakeholder Group	Location or institution	Type of Engagement
<b>Planning Notes</b>		



## STEP 3: ENGAGE

In this step, you will use work with stakeholders to gather information and perspectives about your prioritization objectives.

### ENGAGE: TEMPLATE FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY

Before conducting your chosen activity, fill in the gray boxes. During the engagement activity, record responses in the white boxes.

Stakeholder Group	Location or Institution	Date
Participant names, titles, and/or roles		
Key issue, question, or perspective		
Responses/Notes		
Key issue, question, or perspective		
Responses/Notes		
Key issue, question, or perspective		
Responses/Notes		

## ENGAGE: SKILLS MAPPING ACTIVITY (EXAMPLE)

This page provides instructions for one type of community engagement activity you may use to prioritize SEL skills to create a SEL skills framework. This activity may or may not be appropriate for your setting and goals.

In addition to this mapping activity, you could use other prioritization activities, such as:

- **Voting:** Participants rank skills or other items by assigning them numbers on a written list or show their vote by raising hands, walking to an area of the room, etc.
- **SWOT Chart:** Participants take notes on the Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threats for each prioritization item and use that to discuss how they should be organized or ranked.
- See the **Community Engagement Activity Guide** on page 25 for additional activity ideas.

### Skills Mapping Activity

This activity is one example of a community engagement exercise to prioritize and organize SEL skills into a framework. It starts with the full list of SEL skills that local stakeholders have identified as important or relevant and then asks participants to rank and sort them into categories. This example uses the 6 domains from Learn about Skills (cognitive, emotion, social, values, perspectives, identity) but you could select a different framework to organize skills based on your responses on page 8-10. You can use [Look Inside Frameworks](#) to find a framework that best fits your goals for this exercise, or you can have participants create their own categories.

### Skill Ranking

Compile all the skills that you have identified as relevant from your Reflection charts on pages 8 and 12. Write them as a list of skills on flipchart paper for all participants to see.

Arrange six additional pieces of flipchart paper at the front of the room. Label each one with one domain from a framework of your choice.

<i>Cognitive</i>	<i>Emotion</i>	<i>Social</i>	<i>Values</i>	<i>Perspectives</i>	<i>Identity</i>

Divide participants into groups. Consider your guiding principles on including and valuing the inputs of various stakeholders when deciding whether to create groups of similar or different stakeholders and how to instruct them on inclusive group cooperation.

Give each group a set of small pieces of paper or cards. Explain that each group should write down all the skills from the flipchart list one by one on each piece of paper, so that each skill is on its own card or piece of paper.

After each group has a set of cards with one skill on each card, they should work as a group to arrange the cards in order from most to least important. Remember, these skills have all been identified as important in some way already, so it is likely that different stakeholders may disagree on the ranking within the list. Group members should listen to each other and try to reach a consensus about a

hierarchy of skills. After they have a hierarchy, they should add a number to each card in order from least to most important, so the most important cards will have a high number, and the less important skills will have a low number.

### Skill Sorting

Then group members will decide as a group which category each skill should go into.

Show an example:

<p>#9 Communication</p>
-----------------------------

**Say:** *If the skill is “communication,” which category would it go into?*

**Say:** *It might go into social skills. But where else could it go? There is no right or wrong answer - not every group will always agree. Perhaps it might go into cognitive skills.*

Demonstrate placing the “communication” card onto cognitive or social. You can either tape it to the flipchart paper or write it in marker. Be sure to copy the accompanying number, as well.

**Say:** *Each group has the same list of skills. We want to know if many groups agree, so if another group already wrote your answer, write it again. If a skill is repeated many times, we will know many groups agree. The skills that appear most frequently with the highest number will be prioritized in our framework.*

Give groups about ten minutes to place their skills onto the flipchart paper. The entire group’s answers will be combined, so some skills may be repeated or placed into multiple categories.

Emphasize that it is okay if groups disagree or have different answers.

### Analysis

After all groups have placed their cards, calculate the score of each skill in each category. The skills with the highest scores in each category have been chosen as most important by the group. You can use this information to create a framework by selecting skills to include in each category, creating new categories, or combining/renaming/adapting skills or categories.

In some contexts, it may also be useful to work as a group to create a definition, application, or examples for each category and each skill in your adapted framework.

## STEP 4: SYNTHESIZE

### SYNTHESIZE: THEMES AND OBSERVATIONS

As a user team, read through the notes, flipchart and/or listen to the recording of each community engagement activity.

Pause after each section to note common or outstanding themes and ideas about your objectives, questions, or priorities. You may note the stakeholder group that produced the idea, highlight ideas that came up across multiple stakeholder groups, or note ideas that were controversial or different across stakeholder groups.

Information, theme, or observation shared about Objective, Question, or Priority	Stakeholder

## SYNTHESIZE: CONCLUSIONS

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Revisit your notes on page 13 and then review the themes and observations you recorded on page 20:

- Have you gathered sufficient information to make prioritization decisions and achieve your prioritization objective?
- Whose perspectives and ideas have you considered? What guiding principles did you follow in deciding between opposing viewpoints?
- At any point, did stakeholders provide information that conflicted with your own or your organization's views? Did you follow your guiding principles in considering those opposing viewpoints?
- What conclusions can you draw about ranking, organizing, and understanding your prioritization objectives?
- Are there any areas that need further input or review?

## SYNTHESIZE: ORGANIZE AND COMMUNICATE FINDINGS

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Looking across your terms and definitions, reflect on how you want to organize and communicate your priorities to your community stakeholders. Consider the following questions, and use the space below to write or draw your ideas about how the SEL skills and contextual factors that affect wellbeing could be organized.

- What is similar, overlapping, or related? Could any concepts be grouped together?
- What is most important, most agreed-upon, or non-negotiable?
- What is distinct, unique, or separate from the others? What is unique or defining about it?
- Are there general categories that frame how some of these concepts are related to each other?
- Do you want to emphasize certain concepts? Do you want to de-emphasize other concepts? Why? Document your thinking and reasoning below so you can communicate it to key stakeholders in order to maintain transparency and validation.
- Are there any natural hierarchies (e.g., components that together make up a larger concept)? Could any of the concepts you identified be “nested within” others?

## SYNTHESIZE: PLANS FOR NEXT STEPS

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Document how you plan to include your prioritized concepts in your ongoing PSS-SEL work. Consider the following questions, and write your responses below.

- How will your prioritization outcomes inform your goals or objectives in your PSS-SEL work?
- How will you communicate the priorities you defined on page 22 to relevant stakeholders?
- What are some next steps to validate, implement, and assess your prioritization outcomes?

Use the [Validate for Local Context Tool](#) to ensure that your prioritized concepts accurately reflect needs in your setting.

## ANNEX: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY GUIDE

Community engagement is central to localization: engaging the ideas, perspectives, and opinions of stakeholders in your community will support your work to address their assets, needs, and priorities. This guide includes some ideas for activities to engage stakeholders in collecting this information through participatory and inclusive activities. These activities are meant to be illustrative examples that you can adapt, combine, or use to design other locally appropriate community engagement strategies.

### EXAMPLE ACTIVITIES

**Focus Group Discussions:** Facilitators lead a discussion on key issues or questions. Groups can be composed of one stakeholder group or be a mix of different stakeholders.

**Community Meetings:** Facilitators work with community leaders to hold discussions with community members about key issues as part of local activities such as town hall meetings.

**Key Informant Interviews:** Enumerators engage experts or representatives of different stakeholder groups in conversation about key issues or questions.

**Community Mapping:** Participants sketch a map of their community identifying the physical, social, and environmental assets and need/challenges. Useful when working with children and youth.

**Surveys:** Participants write out responses to written questions. Useful when participants cannot gather or are reviewing written materials independently but requires that all participants are literate.

**Home or School Visits:** Enumerators observe participants in their typical environment. Best in combination with direct feedback channels and when field testing resources.

Key Issues and Considerations		
<b>INCLUSION</b> Before conducting any community engagement activities, ensure that your process is representative and inclusive of diverse stakeholders in your context, including marginalized groups such as children and people with disabilities.  Read more at <a href="https://inee.org/collections/inclusive-education">https://inee.org/collections/inclusive-education</a>	<b>DO NO HARM</b> Consider and mitigate any potential negative impacts of conducting community engagement activities that could exacerbate local tensions or trigger conflict.  Read more at <a href="https://inee.org/resources/do-no-harm-toward-contextually-appropriate-psychosocial-support-international-emergencies">https://inee.org/resources/do-no-harm-toward-contextually-appropriate-psychosocial-support-international-emergencies</a> .	<b>PRIVACY AND CONSENT</b> All participants should be fully informed of how their inputs and information will be used in the activity and allowed to opt out at any time. Any identifying information should be anonymized.



## ABOUT THE TOOLBOX

This tool is part of a Toolbox that can be found online at <http://inee.exploresel.gse.harvard.edu>

The PSS-SEL Toolbox is a collaboration between the EASEL Lab and the Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE). The Toolbox is designed to support stakeholders working on psychosocial support (PSS) and social emotional learning (SEL) in education in emergency settings. For more information, please contact: **Rachel Smith, INEE PSS-SEL Coordinator**, [rachel.smith@inee.org](mailto:rachel.smith@inee.org)

### The EASEL Lab

The Ecological Approaches to Social Emotional Learning (EASEL) Laboratory is located at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. The EASEL Lab's work is focused on exploring the effects of high-quality social emotional interventions on the development and achievement of children, youth, teachers, parents, and communities. Our projects aim to advance the field of SEL through research, practice, and policy. The EASEL Lab also effects change through field-building projects, which work to strengthen the links between SEL evidence, policy, and practice by facilitating greater clarity, transparency, and precision in the field.

For more information about the EASEL Lab, please visit: <http://easel.gse.harvard.edu>

### INEE PSS-SEL Collaborative

The INEE PSS-SEL Collaborative is co-chaired by Silvia Diazgranados Ferrans and Julia Finder Johna. Rachel Smith is the PSS-SEL Coordinator at INEE. For more information about the PSS-SEL Collaborative, please visit <https://inee.org/collaboratives/pss-sel>

## PSS-SEL TOOLBOX

### Prioritize for Local Context

June 2022

Developed by the EASEL Lab at Harvard University  
In partnership with the INEE PSS-SEL Collaborative



# VALIDATE FOR LOCAL CONTEXT

**A localizing process to examine the relevance and fit of PSS-SEL work in your setting. Use this tool to make a plan for meaningful validation with local community stakeholders.**

## Overview

Whether you are adapting, adopting, or creating PSS-SEL materials, this tool guides you through the main elements of a validation process, and helps you make a plan to validate your own PSS-SEL materials. The four steps in this process are:



## Why is it important?

Many PSS-SEL frameworks, measurement tools, and program materials were developed with a specific goal, outcome, context, or population in mind. Materials developed in one context may not be relevant for a different context with different purposes or needs. Likewise, validation is an important final step to refine and confirm a final product even if a resource was designed with stakeholder participation for a specific context or population. This tool will help you plan how to gather feedback from key stakeholders in your setting on the PSS-SEL materials you are developing or implementing. Local feedback is key to ensuring the usability, appropriateness, cultural relevance, uptake, and sustainability of your materials. Stakeholders involved in the validation process may be the same or different than stakeholders who participated in earlier assessment and design steps.

## How can you use it?

Use this tool to plan and carry out a set of activities that engage local community members in providing feedback on the relevance and fit of PSS-SEL materials. Use the tool to identify who should be involved, how to gather useful feedback, and what questions or content reviewers need to address. Use the **worksheets** to outline a validation process for your own PSS-SEL materials.



Inter-agency  
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EASEL  
lab

# ABOUT THE PSS-SEL TOOLBOX

The PSS-SEL Toolbox is a collaboration between the EASEL Lab and the Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE). The Toolbox is designed to support stakeholders working on psychosocial support (PSS) and social emotional learning (SEL) in education in emergency settings. It includes 4 Localizing Tools that can be used individually or in combination.

- Use **Learn About Skills** to review the field of PSS-SEL and peruse an inventory of 24 SEL skills and 30 contextual factors that affect the wellbeing of children and youth
- Use **Identify Local Needs and Assets** to engage local community members to determine the most important PSS-SEL needs in your setting
- Use **Prioritize for Local Context** to reflect on local PSS-SEL priorities, organize and define key concepts in alignment with local objectives, and plan for next steps in your setting
- Use **Validate for Local Context** to examine and revise the relevance and fit of your PSS-SEL work with feedback from local community members



You can find all the tools, as well as guidance on using them, interactive data tools to support localization, and other resources at <http://inee.exploresel.gse.harvard.edu/localizing-tools>.

## Additional Considerations and Resources

The guidance and resources in this toolbox may be supplemented with additional training and information around key issues, including the following.

**Conflict Sensitivity and Do No Harm:** Approaches to education and other programming in conflict contexts that seek to prevent or mitigate negative impacts and promote positive impacts on local dynamics.

Learn more at <https://inee.org/collections/conflict-sensitive-education>.

**Gender Equity and Social Inclusion:** Ensuring that all people, including members of excluded or marginalized groups have equitable access to full participation and representation in all aspects of programming.

Learn more at <https://inee.org/collections/inclusive-education> and <https://inee.org/collections/gender>.

**PSS-SEL Collection:** Resources, trainings, and research on PSS-SEL programming in education in emergencies contexts. Materials support quality design, implementation and monitoring of PSS and SEL programs.

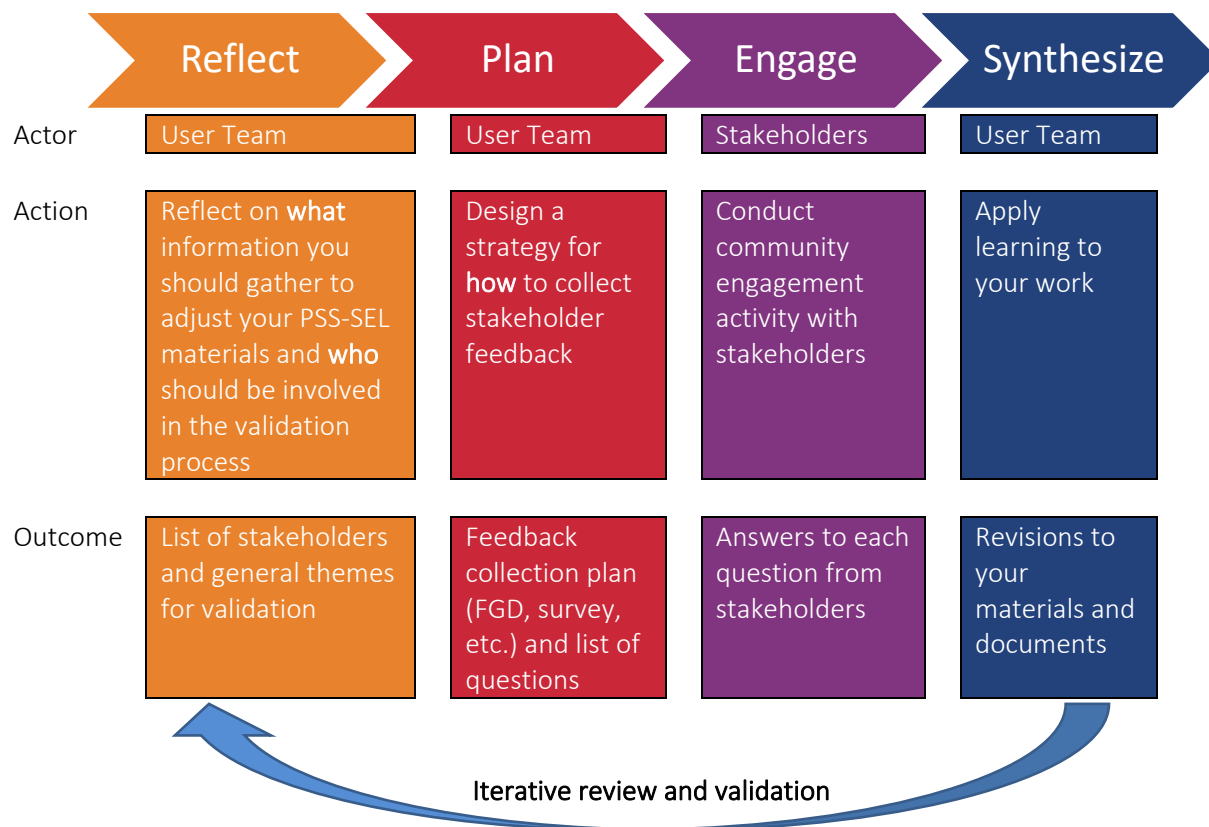
Learn more at <https://inee.org/collections/psychosocial-support-and-social-and-emotional-learning>.

**Teacher Wellbeing:** Approaches that recognize educators and other practitioners as beneficiaries alongside their learners and addresses their needs and perspectives in programming.

Learn more at <https://inee.org/collections/teacher-wellbeing>.

## VALIDATE: INTRODUCTION

This tool provides a basic description of the components of a validation process for PSS-SEL materials. It outlines considerations for who to include, how to collect feedback, and what types of feedback to collect.



### What's inside?

Overview of <b>Validation</b> .....	Page 5-7
<b>Reflect</b> : Instructions and Worksheet.....	Page 8-9
<b>Plan</b> : Instructions and Worksheet.....	Page 10-13
<b>Engage</b> : Instructions and Worksheet.....	Page 14
<b>Synthesize</b> : Instructions and Worksheet.....	Page 15-17
Annex: Community Engagement Guide and References.....	Page 18-19

## OVERVIEW OF VALIDATION

### WHAT IS VALIDATION?

Validation is the process of determining the degree of agreement between a model, tool, or other materials, and the actual system or context [1].

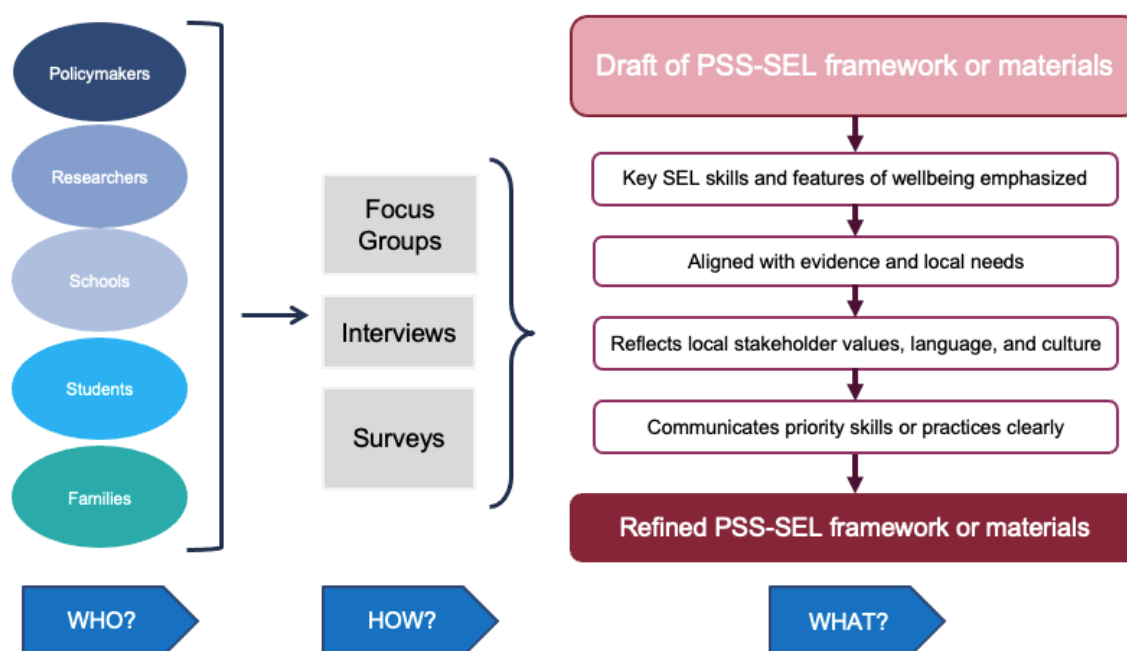
### WHY IS IT NECESSARY TO VALIDATE MATERIALS?

- To check if your assumptions about a context and the needs of a specific population are correct.
- To identify if/when different stakeholders have different views on what your materials should include.
- To recognize if/when skills and competencies look different in your context, and identify those differences.
- To ensure that your ideas and the way you communicate them are clear for others.
- To build materials with the communities intended to use them, because they will better meet the communities' needs.
- To minimize potential risks to ensure you maintain the [Do No Harm principle](#).

### WHAT ARE THE KEY QUESTIONS IN VALIDATION?

The main considerations in a validation process are organized by *who*, *how*, and *what*.

- **Who** may include local families, students, school leaders and staff, researchers, and policymakers.
- **How** may include focus groups, interviews, surveys, and other strategies for gathering feedback.
- **What** will focus on the PSS-SEL materials you are validating and should include a set of criteria.



Key questions for validation:

- Do materials emphasize key skills and contextual factors that affect wellbeing?
- Are materials aligned with evidence and local needs?
- Do materials reflect local stakeholder values, language, and culture?
- Do materials communicate priority skills or practices clearly?

## WHO?

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A successful validation process requires reflecting on **who** the relevant stakeholders may be—who should be included in the process? Consider the example questions below to gather critical feedback for your materials.

- Who is your target population?
- Who will benefit from the materials?
- Who are the local PSS and SEL experts?
- Whose feedback will help you ensure your materials are locally relevant?

## HOW?

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After you have identified who will give you feedback on your materials, think of the best strategy—**how**—to collect that feedback. Consider the example questions below to reflect on the methods you can use to gather feedback.

- What are the best strategies to gather feedback from the relevant stakeholders (e.g., key informant interviews, focus group discussions, surveys, etc.)?
- What is the scope of the validation process? Do you want to hear from as many voices as possible or would you prefer to focus on one specific group (e.g., policymakers, researchers, teachers, etc.)? Why or why not?
- Who should lead the validation process?
- What kind of information are you able to analyze and incorporate into your materials?

Regardless of the strategies you choose, be sure to collect information about the appropriateness, language, comprehensiveness, representativeness, and clarity of your PSS-SEL materials [2].

## WHAT?

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Reflect on **what** information you should gather to adjust your PSS and SEL materials. In addition to asking for feedback on the SEL skills and contextual factors that affect wellbeing you are prioritizing, consider asking stakeholders:

- Do the SEL skills and contextual factors that affect wellbeing included reflect what children need to succeed in your setting?
- Are the definitions of these SEL skills and contextual factors appropriate and locally relevant?
- Are the SEL skills and contextual factors aligned to existing evidence or best practices?
- Do the examples of each of the skills reflect the behaviors that are common in your setting? Do the examples of the contextual factors that affect wellbeing reflect ways that the environment and children's backgrounds and experiences impact their learning, health, and development?
- Are the materials clear, accessible, and feasible for the intended audience?
- Are there any potential risks that could result from the content in these materials or suggested methods of pedagogy and delivery?

Once you have asked for feedback from multiple stakeholders on the content of your PSS-SEL materials, you should adjust and refine them based on the feedback you received.

Remember that **validation is an iterative process** and requires several rounds of revision and adjustments.

## A FINAL NOTE

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The scope of the validation process is entirely dependent on your local needs, strengths, and goals and your resources (e.g., human, financial, logistical). You should decide on the number of participants, the methods, and the materials you choose to validate based on your needs, objectives, and resources, as well as your relationships and systems of coordination with stakeholders. This tool can also be used to supplement existing validation activities if you already have a validation process in place for your program's interventions or materials.

Regardless of its characteristics, all organizations should reflect on these key questions:

1. What should be validated, and to what extent?
2. What is the level of effort that can be dedicated to the validation process?
3. What is the typical process for validation that is used in your setting? How will this impact your validation process?



## STEP 1: REFLECT

After you have gone through the process of adapting, adopting, or creating PSS and SEL materials, and before you are ready to start using them, you should gather as much feedback as possible. To help you brainstorm and identify the best strategies to validate your PSS and SEL materials, this worksheet addresses who, how, and what should be part of your validation process.

### REFLECTION: WHO?

A successful validation process requires you to reflect on **who** the relevant stakeholders may be--those you should include in the process. Consider the questions below to gather critical feedback for your materials.

- **Users:** Who is your target population? Who will use or implement the materials? Who will benefit from the materials?
- **Experts:** Who are the local PSS and SEL experts? Who else holds expertise about children and youth in your setting? Who can share expertise to help you ensure your materials are locally relevant?
- **Other stakeholders:** Whose support do you need to successfully implement these materials? Are there any official processes or approvals required in your context? Who makes the decisions about what resources to use in your context?

Use the space below to list the stakeholders you will include in the validation process.

Users

Experts

Stakeholders

## REFLECTION: WHAT?

---

Reflect on **what** information you should gather to adjust your PSS and SEL materials. In addition to asking for feedback on the SEL skills and contextual factors that affect wellbeing you are prioritizing, ask stakeholders:

- Do the SEL skills and contextual factors that affect wellbeing included reflect what children need to succeed in your setting?
- Are the definitions of these skills and contextual factors that affect wellbeing appropriate and locally relevant?
- Are the SEL skills and contextual factors that affect wellbeing aligned to existing evidence or best practices?
- Do the examples of each of the skills reflect the behaviors that are common in your setting? Do the examples of the contextual factors that affect wellbeing reflect ways that the environment and children's backgrounds and experiences impact their learning, health, and development?
- Are the materials clear, accessible, and feasible for the intended audience?
- Are there any potential risks that could result from the content in these materials or suggested methods of pedagogy and delivery?

Use the space below to brainstorm the information, questions, or decisions that you want stakeholders to address.

*Example question: Do each of the skills included in our framework have a clear definition and application that are easily understandable and shared in our context?*

## STEP 2: PLAN

### PLAN: QUESTIONS

Using your responses in **Reflection: What?** on page 9, write a list of questions that stakeholders will respond to or decisions they will make in your community engagement activity.

Some example questions include:

**Policy:**

Is this new policy in alignment with existing education policy and implementation?

What resources will be needed for your stakeholder group to implement this policy?

**Framework:**

Is this framework missing any skills that you consider critical to your setting?

What is a locally appropriate name for this category of skills?

**Curriculum:**

Will this new curriculum interfere or clash with existing curricula in any way?

What training will be necessary for teachers to implement this curriculum?

EXAMPLE

## PLAN: VALIDATION STRATEGIES

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After you have identified who will give you feedback on your materials, think of the best strategy—**how**—to collect that feedback. Consider the questions below to reflect on the methods you should use to gather feedback. You can refer to page 18 for more details on community engagement activities.

- Which are the best strategies to gather feedback from the relevant stakeholders (e.g., key informant interviews, focus group discussions, surveys, etc.)?
- Will you conduct field testing, simulations, or observations of your materials in use?
- What is the scope of the validation process? Do you want to gather as many voices as possible or would you rather focus on one specific group (e.g., policymakers, researchers, teachers, etc.)? Why or why not?
- Who should lead the validation process?
- What kind of information are you able to analyze and incorporate into your materials?

Use the space below to identify the methods and strategies you will use to gather feedback from the stakeholders you listed above.

*Example: review workshop with ministry of education stakeholders*

## PLAN: DESIGN VALIDATION OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

Using your reflection notes and your list on the previous page, consider for each stakeholder group:

- **Stakeholder:** What is their role in validation?
- **Materials:** What materials will they review?
- **Objective(s):** What information, feedback, or decisions will they provide?
- **Questions:** What questions will you ask them to meet your validation objectives?

EXAMPLE

<b>Stakeholder:</b> <i>Teachers</i>	<b>Materials:</b> <i>Draft SEL Skills Framework: graphic and definitions</i>
<b>Validation Objective(s):</b> <i>Confirm that educators understand the language used in the framework and find it applicable to their students</i>	
<b>Questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What does each term in the framework mean to you?</i></li> <li>• <i>Are there other terms that would be more appropriate?</i></li> <li>• <i>What is an example of what each skill would look like in your context? How would a learner apply each skill? Do these skills capture what your learners must know/know how to do to be successful?</i></li> </ul>	

<b>Stakeholder:</b>	<b>Materials:</b>
<b>Validation Objective(s):</b>	
<b>Questions:</b>	
<b>Stakeholder:</b>	<b>Materials:</b>
<b>Validation Objective(s):</b>	
<b>Questions:</b>	

## PLAN: PREPARE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Using the list of stakeholders and engagement strategies, fill out the charts below. You can conduct one unified activity for all stakeholders, or multiple smaller activities depending on your setting. This guide provides protocols for conducting a workshop, but you can use any engagement activity that is appropriate for that stakeholder in your setting. You can expand these planning charts or plan for more than three groups on separate paper.

Refer to the **Community Engagement Activity Guide** on page 18 for more ideas.

EXAMPLE

<b>Stakeholder Group:</b> <i>Teachers</i>	<b>Location or institution:</b> <i>Cambridge Primary School 14C</i>	<b>Type of Engagement:</b> <i>Framework Validation Workshop</i>
<b>Validation Objectives:</b> Confirm that educators understand the language used in the framework and find it applicable to their students		
<b>Planning Notes:</b> <i>Request permission from head teacher to conduct the activity during the next monthly staff meeting (always takes place on 1<sup>st</sup> Monday of the month)</i> <i>Send an email reminder to all teachers the day before</i> <i>Bring flipchart paper and markers</i> <i>Print out a copy of our draft framework for each participant</i>		

<b>Stakeholder Group:</b>	<b>Location or institution:</b>	<b>Type of Engagement:</b>
<b>Validation Objectives:</b>		
<b>Planning Notes:</b>		
<b>Stakeholder Group:</b>	<b>Location or institution:</b>	<b>Type of Engagement:</b>
<b>Validation Objectives:</b>		
<b>Planning Notes:</b>		

## STEP 3: ENGAGE

### ENGAGE: TEMPLATE FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY

Before conducting your chosen activity, fill in the gray boxes. During the engagement activity, record responses in the white boxes.

Stakeholder Group	Location or Institution	Date
Validation Objective:		
Participant names, titles, and/or roles:		
Question:		
Responses/Notes:		
Question:		
Responses/Notes:		
Question:		
Responses/Notes:		

## STEP 4: SYNTHESIZE

### SYNTHESIZE: THEMES AND OBSERVATIONS

As a user team, read through the notes, flipchart and/or listen to the recording of each community engagement activity. Pause after each section to note common or outstanding themes and ideas about your objectives, questions, or priorities. You may note the stakeholder group that produced the idea, highlight ideas that came up across multiple stakeholder groups, or note ideas that were controversial or different across stakeholder groups.

Information, Feedback, or Decisions	Stakeholder Group



## SYNTHESIZE: RECOMMENDATIONS AND REVISIONS

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Using the previous page, record any stakeholder feedback that provided recommendations or suggested revisions to your materials in the boxes below.

Then work as a user team to decide how you will respond to each recommendation:

- Will you implement the change? How?
- Will you consult other stakeholders to see if they agree?
- How will you incorporate the recommendation into future iterative validation processes? If you choose not to act on a recommendation, why?

<b>Stakeholder:</b>	<b>Recommendation or Revision:</b>
<b>User team Response:</b>	
<b>Stakeholder:</b>	<b>Recommendation or Revision:</b>
<b>User team Response:</b>	
<b>Stakeholder:</b>	<b>Recommendation or Revision:</b>
<b>User team Response:</b>	
<b>Stakeholder:</b>	<b>Recommendation or Revision:</b>
<b>User team Response:</b>	

## SYNTHESIZE: ITERATIVE VALIDATION PROCESS PLANS

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Validation is an iterative process that requires discourse with multiple stakeholders over time. After you implement any revisions from the previous page, you may choose to conduct another validation exercise to confirm those revisions. Validation processes can facilitate opportunities for stakeholders to engage in conversation with each other and to review each other's recommendations and revisions after each validation activity.

Initial validation with key stakeholders may take place before any implementation, but this process can also continue in tandem with implementation of materials, programs, and resources. Ongoing validation may include field testing, observation of implementation, feedback from users, and other participatory monitoring and evaluation activities. You can also revisit the other [Localizing Tools](#) to revise or adapt your materials and resources.

In the box below, write your long-term vision for validation. What validation activities do you expect or plan to conduct at different phases of your implementation? Will you revisit other Localizing Tools?

**Example:** *Once current curricular materials have been validated, we plan to do a more comprehensive localization process for future materials that would include first Identifying Local Needs and Assets, and then Prioritizing for the Local Context as well as iterative validation workshops with a range of stakeholders once the materials are in use to see if we need to course correct.*

## ANNEX: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES GUIDE

Community engagement is central to localization: engaging the ideas, perspectives, and opinions of stakeholders in your community will support your work to address their assets, needs, and priorities. This guide includes some ideas for activities to engage stakeholders in collecting this information through participatory and inclusive activities. These activities are meant to be illustrative examples that you can adapt, combine, or use to design other locally appropriate community engagement strategies.

### EXAMPLE ACTIVITIES

**Focus Group Discussions:** Facilitators lead a discussion on key issues or questions. Groups can be composed of one stakeholder group or be a mix of different stakeholders.

**Community Meetings:** Facilitators work with community leaders to hold discussions with community members about key issues as part of local activities such as town hall meetings.

**Key Informant Interviews:** Enumerators engage experts or representatives of different stakeholder groups in conversation about key issues or questions.

**Community Mapping:** Participants sketch a map of their community identifying the physical, social, and environmental assets and need/challenges. Useful when working with children and youth.

**Surveys:** Participants write out responses to written questions. Useful when participants cannot gather or are reviewing written materials independently but requires that all participants are literate.

**Home or School Visits:** Enumerators observe participants in their typical environment. Best in combination with direct feedback channels and when field testing resources.

Key Issues and Considerations		
<b>EQUITY &amp; INCLUSION</b> Before conducting any community engagement activities, ensure that your process is representative and inclusive of diverse stakeholders in your context, including marginalized groups such as children and people with disabilities.  Read more at <a href="https://inee.org/collections/inclusive-education">https://inee.org/collections/inclusive-education</a> .	<b>DO NO HARM</b> Consider and mitigate any potential negative impacts of conducting community engagement activities that could exacerbate local tensions or trigger conflict.  Read more at <a href="https://inee.org/resources/do-no-harm-toward-contextually-appropriate-psychosocial-support-international-emergencies">https://inee.org/resources/do-no-harm-toward-contextually-appropriate-psychosocial-support-international-emergencies</a> .	<b>PRIVACY AND CONSENT</b> All participants should be fully informed of how their inputs and information will be used in the activity and allowed to opt out at any time. Any identifying information should be anonymized.

## REFERENCES

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- [1] Goodall, D. W. (1972). Building and testing ecosystem models. In Mathematical Models in Ecology. 12th Symp. Oxford: Blackwell Sci. Publ. (pp. 173-94).
- [2] Davis, L.L. (1992). Instrument review: Getting the most from a panel of experts. Applied Nursing Research, 5, 194-197.

## ABOUT THE TOOLBOX

This tool is part of a Toolbox that can be found online at <http://inee.exploresel.gse.harvard.edu>

The PSS-SEL Toolbox is a collaboration between the EASEL Lab and the Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE). The Toolbox is designed to support stakeholders working on psychosocial support (PSS) and social emotional learning (SEL) in education in emergency settings. For more information, please contact: **Rachel Smith, INEE PSS-SEL Coordinator**, [rachel.smith@inee.org](mailto:rachel.smith@inee.org)

### The EASEL Lab

The Ecological Approaches to Social Emotional Learning (EASEL) Laboratory is located at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. The EASEL Lab's work is focused on exploring the effects of high-quality social emotional interventions on the development and achievement of children, youth, teachers, parents, and communities. Our projects aim to advance the field of SEL through research, practice, and policy. The EASEL Lab also effects change through field-building projects, which work to strengthen the links between SEL evidence, policy, and practice by facilitating greater clarity, transparency, and precision in the field.

For more information about the EASEL Lab, please visit: <http://easel.gse.harvard.edu>

### INEE PSS-SEL Collaborative

The INEE PSS-SEL Collaborative is co-chaired by Silvia Diazgranados Ferrans and Julia Finder Johna. Rachel Smith is the PSS-SEL Coordinator at INEE. For more information about the PSS-SEL Collaborative, please visit <https://inee.org/collaboratives/pss-sel>

### PSS-SEL TOOLBOX

#### Validate for Local Context

June 2022

Developed by the EASEL Lab at Harvard University  
In partnership with the INEE PSS-SEL Collaborative



**Inter-agency  
Network for Education  
in Emergencies**



**EASEL**  
lab