

Case Studies on Social and Emotional Learning

SEL applications for Post-conflict, Disarmament, Demobilization &
Reintegration and Disaster Risk Reduction Scenarios

Rwanda ♦ Mozambique ♦ Sri Lanka

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Glossary of Terms:

AHS – Alliance High School

ARC – American Red Cross

CASEL - Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning

CFS – Child Friendly Spaces

DDR – Demobilization, Disarmament, and Rehabilitation

DRR – Disaster Risk Reduction

EDPRS – Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy

EinE – Education in Emergencies

FARG –Fonds d’aide aux rescapes du genocide

FRELIMO - Front for the Liberation of Mozambique

INEE – Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies

IRC – International Rescue Committee

MIGE-PROF – Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion

OVC – Orphans and other Vulnerable Children

RENAMO - Mozambique National Resistance

SEL – Social and Emotional Learning

SLE – Safe Learning Environments

SLRCS – Sri Lankan Red Cross Society

STC – Save the Children

SS – Safe Spaces

Introduction:

Social and emotional competencies are a driving component of academic success. In emergency settings the ties between social, emotional, and academic skills grow stronger as learners of all ages struggle to cope and survive in unstable and often life-threatening environments. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), a leader in social and emotional learning (SEL) research, defines the short-term goals of SEL programs as twofold: "one, promote students' self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, relationship, and responsible decision-making skills¹ and two, improve students attitudes and beliefs about self, others, and school" (CASEL, 2014).

This paper explores three different cases where a SEL program successfully achieved the short-term goals listed above, in order to showcase various ways to design and implement effective SEL programs in diverse emergency settings. The cases presented were chosen because of their diverse locations, partners (e.g. foreign governments, NGOs, local government agencies), and contexts (e.g. post-conflict, natural disaster, humanitarian crisis etc.). In particular, the following research questions will be investigated: How to effectively implement SEL interventions for students living in a variety of different crisis situations? What is the most effective space for implementing SEL programs and curriculum, inside or outside of the classroom? How important is it to infuse culturally relevant curriculum into the design of the SEL intervention?

¹ These are commonly referred to as the five competencies of SEL (see Appendix A)

Across all three cases, there are two emergent trends that help answer the guiding questions above. 1) The success of SEL programs depends on the ability of students and teachers to transfer SEL skills and knowledge (see Appendix A) outside of the classroom for use in variety of social contexts. Thus, in crises situations characterized by severe trauma, the implementation of SEL outside the formal classroom context can often be more beneficial. 2) The use of culturally relevant curriculum in SEL intervention design is highly dependent on the scenario. In the case of Mozambique it was incredibly important, while in Rwanda talking about the genocide remains sanctioned by “genocide ideology” laws that limit the content of culturally specific SEL curriculum (Amnesty International, 2010). These two findings are also helpful for informing how to most efficiently implement SEL programs in a variety of settings. SEL programs implemented outside of the formal classroom is a successful model applicable in a variety of crises contexts, but the introduction of culturally relevant material greatly depends on the particular nature of the crises and what type of material or topics are being presented.

The following case studies were prepared as part of a three-month Education in Emergencies (EiE) course taught in the fall of 2014 at Columbia SIPA. The research questions that informed the findings of this paper were jointly established by Allison Anderson, nonresident fellow at the Center for Universal Education and Meridith Gould, Social & Emotional Learning Technical Advisor for Education at the International Rescue Committee (IRC). Information gathered on the chosen programs was derived from academic studies, internal project assessments and reports from implementing NGOs and partners, as well as personal observations of the author while teaching in

Rwanda from 2011-2013. For the Sri Lanka case, consecutive American Red Cross (ARC) reports were used to track growth of program and teacher trainings. Conclusions drawn regarding the success of Save the Children's (STC) reintegration of Mozambican child soldiers referenced the experience of child soldiers in other countries as means of comparison. Success in all cases was defined according to IRC identified outcomes in well-being and academic or vocational performance, however, a limitation of the research presented is a lack of academic and vocational outcomes for the investigated programs. A greater focus is placed on the psychological, emotional and social outcomes associated with well-being (SEL Technical Capacity Statement, 2014). It should also be noted that for the Rwanda case, no formal documentation of FARG's Family Program is publically available and the case is heavily reliant on the personal observations of the author over the course of 2 years, from 2011-2013.

It is hoped that the findings of this paper will highlight SEL's adaptability and utilization as an increasingly demanded "process" by which many learning outcomes for Peace Education, Human Rights Education, Citizenship Education, DRR and the reintegration of former combatants can be achieved. As the EinE field diversifies, SEL programming is emerging as a means to bridge educational achievement and life-skills instruction, both of which are crucial for rebuilding livelihoods and sustainable states of well-being for students, teachers, schools and their communities.

Case 1: FARG “Family Program” at Alliance High School in Gasabo District, Rwanda

Background:

As part of its reconstruction and development strategy in the years following the Rwandan genocide, the Government of Rwanda identified social protection policies as a key component of their broader Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS) (Aybare, et al, 2015). In 1998, the Fund for Genocide Survivors (FARG) was founded. It has to date spent over 130 billion RWF, roughly 191 million dollars,ⁱ 75% of which goes to educating orphans of the genocide (Musoni, 2012). Starting in 2006, FARG, in coordination with the Ministry of Gender and Family (MIGE-PROF) began to implement SEL programs for orphans and other vulnerable children (OVCs) in Rwandan secondary schools (Aybare, et al, 2015). Alliance High School (AHS), founded in 1996, was one of the first upper secondary schools to accept a majority student body of FARG funded OVCs (AHS, 2012). The start date of the Family Programⁱⁱ at AHS is unknown, however, it remains deeply engrained in the weekly routine of students and is entirely student led. Thus, it can be assumed that its implementation began shortly after the 2006 start of FARG sponsored education programs. The Family Program continues to be active today.

Findings:

In 2011, nearly 70% of AHS’s 800 students were orphans of the genocide and recipients of FARG assistance (Baskin, 2011). While not all OVC students participated regularly in the Family Program, it was observed that 25-30% of OVC students regularly participated in the program, meeting twice weekly during designated times throughout the school

week (Baskin, 2011). During these meetings, “families,” consisting of 15-25 students spanning all grade levels, met at a chosen place on school grounds for 30 minutes. The meeting time for “families” was student owned and run and groups were allowed to use the time however they saw fit; to sing, pray, discuss school and social issues, or specific challenges they were facing. Occasionally, family leaders would invite teachers or non-participating students to visit or join their family meeting, reinforcing a communal level of respect by all students, teachers, and faculty for the important role the Family Program plays in the student life and school culture at AHS.

During Genocide Memorial Month in April, which traditionally falls during the second term of the school year, “families” provide crucial social and emotional support for one another in the absence of student’s lost family members. Throughout the school year, older family members often assume the role of mentor, providing younger family members, who are new to AHS with guidance on how to navigate school culture, be social, excel academically, and how to cope with reoccurring feelings of loss (Baskin, 2011).

Lessons Learned:

The design of FARG’s Family Program is effective on many levels. Informal, outside of the classroom SEL programs in post-conflict countries where free discussion of the genocide is extremely limited should be promoted as a vital alternative outlet. The program’s promotion by FARG and MIGE-PROF makes it credible in the eyes of the school administration that willingly provided time during the school week for family

meetings to occur. The program remains a completely student run initiative, promoting a collective student identity grounded in a shared experience, regardless of age, grade-level, ethnicity, or religion. It fortifies many of SEL's core competencies by building students' capacity for empathy, respect and cooperation. Many of the IRC's identified SEL outcomes are achieved, such as promoting a sense of belonging, efficacy, and self worth, as well as promoting positive relationships with peers and teachers (SEL at the IRC, 2014). This out of classroom SEL approach, is promoted in a 2003 UNESCO report *Never Again: Educational Reconstruction in Rwanda*, which suggests that schools in post-conflict contexts should return immediately to their normal academic regiment and implement provisional activities for OVCs as a compulsory component of a new school order (Obura, 2003). With the exception of start up costs of piloting the program in new schools, there are no reoccurring costs, making the program cost-effective and sustainable over time, with younger family members assuming their roles of their graduating mentors. Lastly, the practice of inviting teachers and other students to visit family meetings rewards pro-active behavior amongst family members and engagement with the larger school community.

Challenges the Family Program faces moving forward is the pending disbandment of FARG and questions regarding the lifeline of the Family Program without FARG's endorsement. Despite the fact that younger students are now too young to have personally lived through the genocide, survivor traits, such as PTSD, anxiety, and depression are transferrable across generations and still must be addressed. Ultimately, the responsibility rests with school administrators who must continue to allot time during the school week

for Family meetings regardless of official protocols. Unfortunately, no formal evaluation of the Family Program's impact on SEL outcomes have been measured and no formal guidelines exist informing the proper implementation of this program in new schools. Additionally, a dearth of information exists regarding the scale of the Family Program across Rwandan secondary schools. In the future, a formalization of Family Program guidelines and identification of SEL outcomes associated with the program are needed to measure its overall impact.

Case 2: Sri Lanka: Red-Cross Psychosocial Training for Teachers

Background:

In 2004, the Indian Ocean tsunami devastated Sri Lanka's coastal areas, killing more than 31,000 people, destroying 100,000 homes, and displacing nearly half a million people (BBC, 2005). Educational infrastructure in the hardest hit regions were wiped out and teachers and students displaced along with the general population. As part of international aid efforts to assist the country in rebuilding, the American Red Cross (ARC) in partnership with the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (SLRCS) introduced a post-tsunami psychosocial program to train local teachers and community volunteers in psychosocial first aid, in hopes that psychosocial guidance would help expedite the healing process for recovering schools and communities (IRIN, 2008). Sri Lanka's case offers an important perspective since the country in 2004 was recovering not only from the tsunami, but was still in the midst of a decades long civil war. The complex emergency that Sri Lankan students and teachers experienced in 2004 created a unique

demand and opportunity for SEL at the intersection of peace education and DRR infused curriculum that the following case will highlight.

Findings:

According to the ARC's 2-year: Tsunami Recovery Report, the tsunami psychosocial program was first implemented by ARC/SLRCS with 1,000 teachers and community volunteers operational in 100 schools, across five districts (2006). In addition to locally implemented teacher training conducted by a handful of psychiatrists and psychologists in 2004, trainings to meet the growing psychosocial needs of survivors were immediately implemented at the tertiary level throughout the country through 17 National Colleges of Education (ARC, 2006). Another innovative aspect of the program was the engagement of children in school activities by "distributing more than 40,000 school kits to encourage students' learning, safety and creativity" (ARC, 2006). The integrated approach and coordinated effort of the Psychosocial Program utilizing existing institutional resources such as teacher colleges, helped the program double in size in only one year to 3,000 teachers and community volunteers trained by 2007 in Sri Lanka and Indonesia (ARC, 2007). In a 2008 interview with Irin news, the Technical Advisor for the program Justin Curry said the program was "designed to neutralize the victim mentality." The program's training does not rely on traditional treatment methods for mental health, but rather "focuses on knitting together communities that have become unraveled after a disaster has struck and equipping them to face future calamities," as well as emphasizing "collective problem solving for a common goal" (IRIN, 2008).

Lessons Learned:

Crises provide us with the opportunity to build back better. In the case of Sri Lanka that involves recognizing the 2004 opportunity to leverage post-tsunami funding and program support at the national and international level to fortify the country against future disasters. The sound partnership between the ARC, SLRCS and the national education system spanning the primary to tertiary level, permitted the training of teachers who are better equipped to recognize and meet the changing demands of their students, as well as their own needs and their community's needs. Additionally, it trained thousands of disaster ready psychosocial support personnel situated in districts across the country, while simultaneously empowering trainees to be proactive about rebuilding and caring for their own communities and neighbors, regardless of their religion or ethnicity.

In a country fractured by civil war, professional trainings in psychosocial first aid can be an effective method of indirectly delivering core SEL skills such as empathy and social awareness. First aid trainings also familiarized participants with the foundations of peace education (understanding, tolerance, etc....) and DRR (active participation, problem solving, etc....). Further evidence should be conducted on how these different educational approaches interact and their effect on SEL learning outcomes and academic achievement. In recent years, Sri Lanka's initial success in integrating desired educational outcomes within post-crisis action plans has been increasingly strengthened through the adoption of INEE minimum standards (INEE, 2013). Their continued success should be a model for countries implementing SEL programming in complex emergencies

Case 3: Rehabilitation of Child Soldiers at Lhanguene Centre in Maputo, Mozambique

Background:

Shortly after their independence from Portugal in 1975, Mozambique entered a 16-year civil war that lasted from 1977-1992 fought between the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO) and the Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO).

During the war, it is estimated that one million civilians were killed, 60% of which were children (Aird et. al, 2014). Moreover, it is estimated that more than one quarter of the soldiers who fought in the civil war were forced into conflict before their 18th birthday (Aird et. al, 2014). Both sides are guilty for enlisting children into their armed ranks.

Girls were forced to become wives or servants, while the boys were “initially given heavy civilian tasks and slowly indoctrinated” in preparation for joining the armed forces (Boothby et al., 1991). As Mozambique’s civil war neared a close in 1988, Save the Children (STC) was asked by the Government of Mozambique to assist in reintegrating 39 child soldiers enlisted by RENAMO, between the ages of 6 to 16 years old, at the Lhanguene Center in Maputo (Boothby et al., 2006). The Lhanguene Center case has been referenced by many organizations working with child soldiers, however, it hasn’t been investigated from an SEL perspective and is useful for understanding the power of SEL both as a method of conscripting children into the armed forces and as a way to rehabilitate and reintegrate them back into society.

Findings:

STC's six month rehabilitation program at the Lhanguene Center focused on achieving four outcomes, "establish safety and appropriate codes of conduct, re-establish self-regulatory processes, promote security versus survival-seeking appraisal and behavior, and support meaning-making" (Boothby, et al., 2006). In pursuit of these outcomes, STC staff worked to establish new social and behavioral norms within the center and to counteract RENAMO's attempt to "harden the children emotionally by punishing anyone who offered help or displayed feelings for others" (Boothby, et al., 2006). They introduced daily activities aimed at replacing the coping and survival mechanisms instilled in the children after years of war, with feelings of safety, stability, and normalcy (STC, 2004). The goal of these activities - playing sports, music, group art projects, and sharing personal narratives - are similar to that of activities conducted in Child Friendly Spaces (CFS) or what STC refers to as safe spaces (SS). Spaces that promote interactive activities where child soldiers can relearn trust, communication and conflict resolution skills, cooperation, and individual expression (STC, 2004). These activities are a method of providing needed psychosocial support and life skills that can be utilized outside of the center once the children are integrated back into society (UNICEF, 2009). The impact of the program on participating children was assessed using a Child Behavior Inventory (CBI) to measure levels of aggression, PTSD, and high-risk to pro-social behavior. While the children exhibited a wide range of behaviors when they first arrived, largely indicative of how much time they spent in the armed forces, after 3 months the CBIs showed signs of achieved "normalization" for all children, associated with decreased aggression towards staff, increased pro-social behaviors and engagement (Boothby &

Thomson, 2013). This finding lends to the widespread view that with the proper support and resources, children can recover quickly from severe trauma and are often more resilient than their adult counterparts (Martone, 2014).

A group of researchers from Columbia University led by Prof. Neil Boothby, Director of the Program on Forced Migration and Health, conducted a study that followed the reintegration of rehabilitated child soldiers from Lhanguene back into their communities over the course of 16 years. Their findings, published last year, found that “most have regained a foothold in the economic life of rural Mozambique” and “are perceived by their spouses to be good husbands” (Boothby & Thomson, 2013). All of the former child soldiers continue to experience psychological stress, but rely on their family, community, and friends to overcome these adversities. Noted in the 16 year study is the STC program’s success in delivering coping strategies for managing grief and trauma, as well as instilling a sense of social responsibility and the importance of self-regulation. However, participants, above all, identified their largest need as being accepted back into their family and communities, which most of them were able to accomplish with the exception of 3 participants from the original group of 29 (Boothby & Thomson, 2013).

Lessons Learned:

The partnership between STC and Neil Boothby’s team at Columbia allowed for the implementation of a specific SEL intervention with continued external M&E of the participants involved throughout the duration of the program and after the programs completion. This type of partnership between academic institutions and program

implementers, whether NGOs, multilateral organizations, or national governments should serve as a best practice for how to integrate SEL program design with continual M&E.

The Lhanguene case emphasizes the importance of SEL skills for child-soldiers in order to achieve what the STC program participants identified as the ultimate goal, successful reintegration back into communities and families. A return to formal schooling is traditionally an important part of the reintegration process, however, it was less successful in Mozambique than in DDR programs in other countries, like Sierra Leone. In Mozambique, many reintegrated child soldiers rejected formal schooling as means for future progress, instead pursuing “farming and other income-earning opportunities to enable them to earn money for a wife and family” (Williamson, 2006). Unlike in Rwanda and Sri Lanka, Mozambican child soldiers identified a need for vocational training over well-being interventions, as the key to achieving social acceptance in their communities. Additionally, culturally relevant and traditional forms of public reintegration, such as cleansing ceremonies, were important for the acceptance of child soldiers back in the community (Williamson, 2006) and “vital for rebuilding community trust and cohesion” (Boothby et al., 2006).

Conclusion:

Three recommendations for the future design, implementation and measurement of SEL programming emerge from the case studies above. They take into consideration both the relevant themes discussed in the introduction, as well as the guiding research questions for this paper.

First is the scaling up of SEL programs outside of the classroom for students, teachers, and communities that have directly been exposed to prolonged and severe traumas of war or genocide, such as in the cases of Rwanda and Mozambique. Alternatively, a quick return to a formalized school environment immediately following a crisis where communities are collectively impacted by a natural disaster can hasten the healing process, especially if SEL is delivered by teachers and volunteers who have received formal training in psychosocial support, as was the case in Sri Lanka. Second is the expanded application of SEL as a means for achieving outcomes in other areas of development and well-being that do not fall within the formal education sector, such as DDR and DRR. SEL should increasingly be framed as a method of bridging the short-term goals of emergency response and the long-term goals of sustainable development. Finally, strategic partnerships between SEL program implementers and multi-level stakeholders in country are crucial for the effective design and implementation of integrated, context specific and culturally relevant SEL programming that is inclusive, sustainable, and measurable.

A crosscutting issue that wasn't addressed directly in the cases is gender sensitivity when implementing SEL programs. Traditional norms around the world that dictate women and girls to be unobtrusive and passive, and that prohibit them from attending school, especially in the midst of emergencies, can serve as barriers for the successful achievement of SEL outcomes.

As stated in a co-published 2013 education note by the World Bank and the IRC, the future prioritization of SEL programs in low-resource contexts, particularly in conflict and post-conflict settings is needed in order to thoroughly understand the various applications and impact of SEL (Diaz Varela et al., 2013). With the frequency of emergencies rising around the world, adaptable approaches like SEL, capable of building resilience, emotional intelligence and pro-social behavior will be of increasing importance to all sectors in the future.

ⁱ The conversion rate used is 1 USD: 681 RWF according to the rate on March 24, 2014. Conversion taken from http://coinmill.com/RWF_USD.html

ⁱⁱ The official name of the FARG “Family Program” is unknown, but the author observed the implementation of the program twice weekly for the duration of the entire 2011-2012 academic year at Alliance High School in Nyacyonga Town, Gasabo District. Student leaders of the program commonly referred to the program as the “Family Program.”

Appendix A: CASEL – Social and Emotional Core Competencies



CASEL: Social and Emotional Learning Core Competencies. Retrieved 3/30/2014 from <http://www.casel.org/social-and-emotional-learning/core-competencies/>

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