psychosocial support for UNRWA schools: a conceptual framework

2016

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foreword

UNRWA’s Education Programme aims to foster an inclusive learning environment where the needs of all Palestine refugee children are supported as a whole. This requires schools to create an environment which promotes students’ psychosocial well-being and where the psychosocial needs of refugee children are recognized and addressed.

The implementation of inclusive education is supported by the Inclusive Education Policy, the Inclusive Education Strategy, the School Health Strategy and the Psychosocial Support for UNRWA schools: a conceptual framework. The Framework aims to guide Counselors and educators to apply the inclusive approach to holistic, comprehensive, rights-based, child-centered, child-friendly and enabling psychosocial support, within UNRWA’s education system which is aligned with the Agency’s Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Framework. It is intended to help Counselors and educators foster inclusive learning environments by helping them to better understand the psychosocial needs and the well-being of the children. Practical examples of psychosocial support at the classroom and school level are included in this document.

It is important to identify and address the psychosocial needs of children in regular situations and in times of emergency. Psychosocial support in conflict and emergency contexts is highlighted through the three phases of psychosocial support in emergency described in the Framework.

We hope that Education staff find this Framework useful in helping promote the psychosocial well-being of children, and I would like to thank the German Government and, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH for their support in this key area, and in the development of the Framework.

Caroline Pontefract
Director of Education
March, 2016
# Overview of the Document

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<td>2. The Agency-wide Approach to Mental Health and Psychosocial Support</td>
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<td>3. The Inclusive Approach to Psychosocial Support</td>
<td>Chapter 3 explains key psychosocial needs and the child developmental process; the principles of psychosocial support; the psychosocial support provided in UNRWA schools from an inclusive perspective from <strong>ALL</strong> children with basic needs, to <strong>SOME</strong> children with additional needs and to a <strong>FEW</strong> children with extensive needs; and provides practical examples of PSS in the classroom.</td>
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<td>4. Psychosocial Well-being in Conflict and Emergencies</td>
<td>Chapter 4 focuses on psychosocial support during conflict and emergencies. It discusses the importance of providing PSS in emergencies and explores chronic and specific emergencies. It highlights social and psychological processes that take place in emergencies. It describes how the UNRWA response is related to three phases: preparedness, emergency response and post-crisis recovery in relation to three main aspects including protective factors, coping mechanisms and emotional resilience.</td>
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<td>5. Psychosocial Needs of Teachers and Other Educators</td>
<td>Chapter 5 considers the psychosocial needs of teachers and other educators during normal situations and in times of emergency. It highlights methods of responding to these psychosocial needs including self-care, which includes self-protection and burn-out prevention, and support groups.</td>
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1. introduction
UNRWA is committed to providing quality Inclusive Education (IE) which respects the rights, and appreciates the diversity, of all children. The UNRWA Education Programme aims to remove any barriers to learning and participation to help all Palestine refugee children realize their full potential. This requires that the school is an environment which promotes students’ psychosocial well-being and where psychosocial needs of refugee children are recognized and addressed.

1.1 purpose
The purpose of this Framework is to strengthen psychosocial support (PSS) in UNRWA’s Education Programme in order to ensure that the psychosocial needs of children are identified and addressed and to realize equal access for all children to quality education regardless of gender, abilities, disabilities, socio-economic status, health and psychosocial needs.

The Framework promotes a shared understanding of the concepts, principles and approach for psychosocial support. It thus serves as a key reference document for the capacity development of teachers, School Counselors, School Principals, Education Specialists and other related education cadre.

It will support teachers, School Principals, School Counselors, Education Specialists and Student Support Teams in fostering psychosocial well-being and understanding and providing continued psychosocial support within the overall inclusive approach in UNRWA schools. This will help ensure that the psychosocial needs of children are identified and addressed in regular situations and in times of emergency.

1.2 rationale
Palestine refugee children, like all children across the globe, have a need for an environment that positively fosters their social, emotional and intellectual development and well-being. This environment has to address individual and social factors which impact a child’s development and well-being, such as the child’s attitude, the socio-economic context and social and cultural values.

The review by UNIVERSALIA of the UNRWA Agency-wide Education Programme, indicated that one third of UNRWA’s registered refugees face barriers to their psychosocial well-being, including through their living in poor conditions in overcrowded camps and apartments with inadequate natural light and a lack of sanitation facilities. Other barriers to psychosocial well-being can be related to the education system and school environment, or the home environment. In UNRWA, many schools have more students than can be accommodated in one shift and therefore schools have to work on double shift; this most likely means limited opportunities for extracurricular activities, play and recreation which can worsen any behavioral issues. School based violence is also reported by teachers and students and, while corporal punishment is forbidden in UNRWA schools, there are indications that disciplinary

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measures based on verbal and physical abuse may still exist. The examination oriented and overloaded curricula and teaching practices, which the Education Reform has sought to change, can also cause stress among students and their families. It can mean that students with additional needs at school can be vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion in the classroom.²

In situations of conflict, war and emergency, for example UNRWA students in Gaza (2008, 2009, 2012, 2014) West Bank, Lebanon and since 2011 Syria, students likely experience greater difficulties in learning and their concentration, increased aggression, social isolation, somatic complaints and reduced hope for the future.³ As a result chronic fear, difficult grief processes and trauma may become permanent aspects of everyday life. In response to these needs and in line with the IE Policy, this Framework seeks to strengthen psychosocial support provided through UNRWA’s Education Programme.

1.3 from guidance and counseling to psychosocial support at UNRWA

UNRWA’s response to the psychosocial needs of school children within the Education Programme has traditionally been through the provision of individual and group counseling services. Since 1988 a one year in-service training course for teachers in guidance and counseling, developed by the Institute of Education at UNRWA HQ in Amman has been in place. In the 1990s, the School Counselor post was introduced to provide counseling services to students.

The School Counselor’s duties focus on identifying students’ problems, enabling them to work through them and managing the behaviour of students whose problems are deemed beyond the competency of the teacher. However, the high number of schools and students to be supported by each Counselor place serious constraints on the ability of Counselors to carry out their duties. This has led to Counselors working as rapid intervention problem solvers, dealing with symptoms such as behavioural problems on the surface rather than holistically addressing the psychosocial needs of the child. Moreover, as the UNIVERSALIA report identified, even this traditional model of support was compromised by poor collaboration between some School Principals and School Counselors.⁴ Furthermore, the emphasis on School Counselors to address children’s needs with the teacher’s role in this area minimized led to teachers not being considered responsible for the psychosocial development of children. This has led to educational and psychosocial interventions being viewed separately and has compromised the quality of the support provided.

The Education Reform of 2010 aimed to enhance the quality of education in order to achieve the full potential of all Palestine refugee children through a coherent, interrelated approach. The interrelatedness of the substantive reform areas (teacher development, curriculum and student assessment, and inclusive education) was aimed at fostering a responsive education system that supports the psychosocial well-being of children.

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Inclusive education is at the heart of the reform and it addresses and explicitly emphasizes moving away from a problem-centered school discipline, guidance and counseling approach, towards identifying and responding to the diverse needs of children in a more holistic, comprehensive, rights-based and child-centered approach.

This *Psychosocial Support for UNRWA Schools: A Conceptual Framework* was developed as a more specific response to the increasing needs, reflected in the findings of scoping visits to all five Fields of operation and a series of discussions, reviews and analyses of practices in place. The need for a comprehensive and systematic cross-sectorial collaboration on psychosocial support was emphasized throughout; this means UNRWA programmes and departments: Education, Health, Relief and Social Services, Infrastructure & Camp Improvement, Planning and Protection, working together. This education framework is aligned with Agency-wide Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS).
2. the Agency-wide approach to mental health and psychosocial support

At the Agency cross-sectoral level, UNRWA will build the capacity of key staff to respond to individual needs and work to ensure coordinated internal referral and/or external referral. In order to achieve this, the MHPSS Framework defines multi-tiered levels of support and response: prevention/promotion, assessment, response and referral. The underlying philosophy of the framework is the need to better understand well-being in a comprehensive way which addresses the whole context, allows people’s strengths and resources to be recognized and their empowerment facilitated at every opportunity. This approach is not a theoretical model or a set of techniques, but an overall approach which encompasses a particular philosophy and principles.

The framework emphasizes that addressing the MHPSS needs of Palestinian refugee children requires first and foremost the development of protective strategies, which UNRWA is in a unique position to do by fostering an enabling environment. UNRWA must work to ensure that negative psychosocial effects of conflict and instability on human development are minimized by using strategies that build resilience.

This Psychosocial Support for UNRWA Schools A Conceptual Framework addresses how the Education Programme will achieve this.

2.1 concepts and definitions of mental health and psychosocial well-being

The Agency uses the World Health Organization’s (WHO) definition of mental health which defines mental health as ‘a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community’. The positive dimension of mental health is stressed in the WHO definition of health as contained in its constitution: ‘Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity’.  

The term “psychosocial” refers to the dynamic relationship that exists between the psychological and social aspects of development which continually interact with and influence each other. Psychological aspects of development refer to an individual’s thoughts, emotions, behaviors, memories, perceptions and understanding. The social aspects of development refer to the interaction and relationships between the individual, family and community.

Closely linked, but with a slightly different emphasis, the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) defines psychosocial well-being as: ‘A condition of holistic health in all its dimensions: physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual.’ Also viewed as a process, ‘well-being’ means what is good for a person: participating in a meaningful social role; feeling happy and hopeful; living according to good values, as locally defined; having positive social

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5 Definitions were agreed upon during the ‘Agency-wide Psychosocial Support Framework’ forum held in Amman on the 14th & 15th of September, 2014.


relations and a supportive environment; coping with challenges through the use of appropriate life skills; and having security, protection, and access to quality services.\(^8\)

In these definitions the link between mental health and psychosocial well-being is clearly illustrated. Mental health and psychosocial well-being are terms that therefore complement and enhance each other.

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3. the inclusive approach to psychosocial support

3.1 psychosocial needs

The psychosocial needs of children refer to any emotional, social, mental and spiritual needs they may have. All children have a need for psychosocial well-being and this is promoted in an environment that fosters their social, emotional and intellectual development. It is important for professionals working with children to understand the psychosocial needs of children through the different stages of their development. In relation to the education system, psychosocial needs can be addressed through: relationships with caregivers; meaningful relationships with peers and social competence; a sense of belonging; a sense of self-worth and value; self-esteem and trust in others; access to opportunities; intellectual and physical engagement in activities physical and psychological security; hopefulness or optimism about the future; responsibility and empathy; and adaptability and creativity.

3.2 principles of psychosocial support

This framework outlines an inclusive approach to PSS which is built on the following principles:

1. holistic

Psychosocial support will be built on a holistic understanding of the interrelatedness of the context and the educational, psychological, physical, social, welfare and safety needs of the child.

2. comprehensive

A comprehensive approach which means emphasizing the psychosocial well-being of all students, in all aspects of their education, and involving all stakeholders.

3. rights-based

Psychosocial support is built on a rights-based approach, one which emphasizes the right of the child to learning, development, participation and protection.

4. child-friendly

A child-friendly environment is one which is an engaging, supportive, safe and stimulating school and classroom environment. Such as an environment which provides enjoyable learning experiences that support the psychosocial development, coping mechanisms and resilience of all children and promotes their psychosocial well-being.

5. child-centered

Child-centered psychosocial support will be based on the best interest, needs and abilities of the child, rather than based on other interests or demands.

6. enabling

Psychosocial support is a key tool for enabling and empowering children, it will recognize barriers to well-being, the development of coping mechanisms and the promotion of positive aspects of life.
3.3 The provision of psychosocial support at UNRWA schools

Building on the same approach adopted by the IE Policy and Strategy, the below diagram illustrates what PSS support means for All, Some and a Few children within an inclusive approach:

- A few children may have extensive needs and may require long term extensive support. This support will build on the collaboration between different programmes/internal referral, or be through alternative provision outside UNRWA/external referral. (RESPOND AND REFERRAL)

- Some children need additional support. In the regular classroom environment and through school based support measures, the Student Support Team assists teachers in identifying (ASSESSMENT) and responding to student’s additional needs.

- All children need support through quality child-centered education in a safe and stimulating environment that promotes the well-being of all children and meets the needs of most of them in the normal classroom environment. (PREVENTION/PROMOTION)

For ALL children, IE is about a school environment that respects the diversity of children and strengthens and supports them all to learn and develop according to their needs and capacities. The implementation standards of the IE Strategy emphasize that at the heart of the inclusive approach it is the school and classroom environments that promote the psychosocial well-being of all children. They do this by providing welcoming, child-centered, healthy, safe and stimulating environments with zero tolerance to violence, bullying and discrimination of any kind.

UNRWA teachers should use inclusive language, attitudes and teaching practices that actively support children’s social, emotional, physical and cognitive development. It is important that teachers understand this interrelatedness of learning and psychosocial well-being, and are therefore aware of how they can provide PSS through ensuring positive classroom interaction: demonstrating understanding, care and compassion, listening to the student’s worries, giving individual attention to students and using positive behavior management strategies.

Teachers need to avoid labeling children and establish and sustain social interactions where children support each other and where difference is a sign of enrichment, not of disturbance. In crowded classrooms and, given the already mentioned stressful life situation of most children, teachers may require additional help and here the SST, School Principal, Counselor, Education Specialist or other teachers play a key role.
• For **SOME** children who may need **additional support**, teachers need to be able to identify if some children have psychosocial needs through informal assessment, observation and information gathering. This process is supported by the **Teachers Toolkit for Identifying and Responding to the Diverse Needs of Students** in UNRWA schools.

Sometimes, although a teacher has provided an inclusive classroom environment, has identified a need and has provided the support at the classroom level, the needs of the child cannot be met through the support initiated by the teacher alone. In such instances, the teacher can seek support and advice from the school based Student Support Team as to how best address the child’s additional needs. The Student Support Team should plan for school based additional support measures for the child, this may include parental involvement, individual counseling, and any other special arrangements which will help meet the needs of the child. Additionally, the Student Support Team should provide the necessary support to the teacher to support the child at the classroom level. At this point, an **Individual Education Plan (IEP)** can be developed by the Student Support Team, in agreement with the referring teacher. The IEP will outline the child’s needs and measures to be taken to support the child. The collaboration between teachers and Counselors at this level are very important and, if a child’s need is identified and addressed early enough, this can help avoid the need for more specialized support.

• For the **FEW** children with **extensive needs**, who may require MHPSS interventions, they will likely need to receive extensive support from the School Counselor and/or be internally or externally referred to more specialized services while confidentiality is protected. Children who have experienced extreme trauma, severe adversity, or have been subjected to violent acts, may require such intensive, individual psychological support. There are some existing systems in UNRWA which can be drawn upon, one such example is with regard to gender based violence survivors where referral to internal and external service providers helps ensure needs are more appropriately met. However, extensive needs are not only addressed by the School Counselor or other service providers, they will still be supported at the classroom level by the teacher, at the school level by the Student Support Team (including the School Counselor) and by other service providers as needed.

If a majority of the children have been exposed to severe trauma, such as after a war, they will present extensive needs. In such situations psychosocial support must focus on the first level described above (for **ALL**) and not wait for specialized interventions that might not be available. It is important for the teacher to be aware that even if specialized extensive support is available, the children still need specific support at the classroom level.

### 3.4 practical examples of PSS at the classroom and school level

To address the needs of all children - basic (ALL), additional (SOME), or extensive (FEW) - teachers and Counselors can promote a child-friendly, safe and stimulating environment through:

• showing respect and empathy for each child and accepting and encouraging all the children without condemning, rejecting, or laughing at them, etc.;

• giving children a sense of self-worth through encouragement and recognition;

• helping children deal with their feelings;
• using teaching and learning methods that involve student’s decision-making, active participation, interaction and learning through a variety of methods;
• developing student’s life skills and their ability to solve problems by helping them learn conflict resolution, tolerance and behavioral skills as well as developing their social and study skills;
• promoting resilience by being a role model for resilience through promoting the ability to adapt to change and maintaining a positive outlook on the future;
• displaying students’ work in the classroom;
• establishing stable and predictable routines in the classroom as well as in individual support sessions;
• engaging children in dialogue, listening and sharing information;
• creating opportunities for children to maintain friendships and meet with peers;
• providing expressive and recreational activities that enable a sense of play and joyfulness and allow children to express what they are experiencing;
• carrying out a thorough identification of the child’s needs and listening carefully to what the child has to say;
• using positive behavior management strategies such as reward systems that reinforce positive behavior, and opportunities to reflect on mistakes;
• protecting confidentiality as a primary duty within a teaching or counseling relationship;
• focusing not only on the difficulties but on the strengths of the child; and
• organizing expressive and creative activities that enable a sense of play and joyfulness and facilitate processes of self-empowerment.

All the approaches are the basis of good teaching and as such are exemplified in all the professional development programmes developed through the Education Reform such as the Teachers Toolkit for Identifying and Responding to the Diverse Needs of Students which include gender issues, SBTD I and 2, Leading for the Future, Human Rights education, and the Curriculum Framework.
4. psychosocial well-being in conflict and emergencies

The provision of education in emergencies is key in supporting the psychosocial needs and well-being of children in normal situations and in times of emergency. Through psychosocial support in emergencies, the impact of conflict on the child as a whole can be understood and a specific and enhanced response can be undertaken.

In the context of prolonged conflict, as is often the case for Palestine refugees, it is important to understand that there are two situations: chronic emergencies and specific emergencies. A chronic emergency is not accompanied by acute life threats but there is ongoing tension with permanent fear and the atmosphere is likely to be between normal and depressive. Whereas during specific emergencies there is a direct threat to life with ongoing destruction of infrastructure while stress and tension are very high.

For addressing psychosocial well-being in any conflict environment, there are corresponding social and psychological processes that need to be taken into consideration. For example, fear is seen as a result of or a psychological reaction to a threat, which can be positive and negative at the same time. In addition, a threat could be connected to destruction as a social process which can be a long-term process and have long-term effects or psychological reactions such as trauma. Furthermore, grief is a psychological reaction which results from the feeling and process of loss which can accumulate over time to be a chronic element of depression.

4.1 UNRWA’s approach to psychosocial support in emergencies

The UNRWA educational approach to psychosocial support in emergency builds on the regular PSS structure and follows the same principles that foster psychosocial well-being at any time. The approach encompasses the principles of IE, building on the comparative advantage and complementing the current strengths of IE. In an emergency context, UNRWA should be in a position where it can scale up its regular system of PSS through applying additional measures, such as safe learning spaces, adequate and appropriate educational resources and specific PSS interventions as well as coordinating with sister agencies, NGOs and host governments. Emergency contexts are ongoing cycles and continuous processes that stretch from pre-crisis to post-crisis contexts, covering the three phases: preparedness, response and recovery as follows:
For each of the above phases there are three key elements that are explained below:

- **protective factors**: these are the external factors that support psychosocial well-being. Important protective factors are child-friendly school environments, opportunities for learning, play and recreation, healthy friendships, peer relations and supportive parents and teachers.

- **coping mechanisms**: these are behavioral and psychological strategies that help the individual to master, cope with, reduce or bear stressful and difficult situations. Here schools can promote coping mechanisms by developing student’s life skills, their ability to solve problems, helping them learn conflict resolution, tolerance and behavioral skills as well as developing their social and study skills.

- **emotional resilience**: this can be strengthened by both the protective factors and the coping mechanisms. Emotional resilience refers to the individual’s emotions, attitudes and their ability to adapt to change, cope with difficult life situations and to maintain a positive outlook for the future. Emotional resilient students can overcome difficulties more easily and are more likely to recover from them quicker than less resilient students. Teachers can promote resilience by providing positive role models.

Each of the emergency phases is described in the following tables which explicitly address each of the emergency phases with regard to the three elements: protective factors, coping mechanisms and emotional resilience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>education in emergencies: preparedness phase</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>protective factors</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• addressing psychosocial needs of children through encouraging feelings of freedom, of having a chance to be creative and of living a life not determined by warfare</td>
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<tr>
<td>• providing opportunities for play, recreation and extracurricular activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>• preparing for future possible emergencies through developing basic standards about how to react in case of emergencies</td>
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<tr>
<td>• planning cooperation between UNRWA staff and with parents and children</td>
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<tr>
<td>• creating opportunities to maintain friendships and meet with peers</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>coping mechanisms</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• helping them understand and deal with ongoing fears that continue in spite of the fact that the threat has disappeared</td>
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<tr>
<td>• helping children deal with feelings of depression and hopelessness</td>
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<tr>
<td>• working with children on their strengths and their capacities to express their feelings</td>
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<tr>
<td>• conducting recreational activities to relieve stress</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>emotional resilience</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• strengthening relational networks with their peers, in the school, between families and in the community</td>
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<tr>
<td>• making the need for psychosocial well-being a community topic and not an issue only for individuals with problems</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| protective factors | • ensuring continuity of daily lives and routines, including formal and non-formal schooling  
• providing access to safe and child-friendly spaces (including homes, schools or places of worship)  
• giving opportunities for play and recreation to enable children to express what they are experiencing  
• ensuring opportunities to participate in helpful activities with their family (cooking, putting a sibling in bed etc.; in a disaster the person least scared is always somebody with a task)  
• providing care and support from parents and teachers  
• giving opportunities to maintain friendships and meet with peers |
| coping mechanisms | • providing children with the skills and knowledge for protecting themselves from danger  
• creating opportunities to talk to someone about their feelings and emotions without pressure to do so  
• creating opportunities to express feelings and emotions through play, drawing, writing etc.  
• conducting recreational activities to relieve stress |
| emotional resilience | • acknowledging their feelings when they are hurt or scared  
• respecting their wish and their right to know what is going on  
• giving them responsibilities, so they can feel that they also participate and help  
• understanding that children need to play, but also that they need to be taken seriously  
• avoid giving wrong or inaccurate information |
| **protective factors** | • acknowledging what has happened, celebrate still being alive and begin to grieve what is necessary to grieve  
• facilitating a smooth transition to normalcy  
• starting school with a period where all activities focus on psychosocial needs  
• developing expressive and creative activities, allowing children to reflect and elaborate on their experience together with teachers and Counselors  
• integrating psychosocial needs into everyday teaching once normal teaching continues  
• avoiding stressful learning, especially “having to catch up” |
| **coping mechanisms** | • acknowledging what has happened, openly discuss it and help children in going back to normal learning  
• creating opportunities to talk to someone about one’s feelings and emotions without pressure to do so  
• addressing fear, trauma and grief according to the needs of different children. Not all children need help at the same time. Each has their own rhythm of overcoming difficult experiences and some children will not be able to cope by themselves and will need special support |
| **resilience factors** | • acknowledging their feelings when they are hurt or scared  
• respecting children’s wishes and their right to know what is going on  
• giving children ongoing opportunities to talk about their feelings and opinions on the past, present and future |
5. psychosocial needs of teachers and other educators

Teachers, Counselors, School Principals and the education support cadre also have psychosocial needs and a right to psychosocial well-being. The psychosocial well-being of teachers and other staff is important happy teachers make happy children.

This Framework highlights two main dimensions of education staff care. The first one is self-care, which is what every individual needs to do in order to establish and maintain their health, and prevent and address their psychosocial needs. It requires the active participation of individuals in enhancing their own well-being. The second dimension of education staff care is through support groups. Such groups can become spaces where teachers or Counselors reflect about their work, share experiences and solve problems together. They can also reflect on their own well-being in school and work on self-care and burnout prevention. Such structured spaces can be of great value during emergencies in addition to normal situations as closely knit networks can be quickly activated and used in special circumstances as needed.

Educators can support each other’s psychosocial well-being through normal interactions. School Principals, Counselors and teachers need to establish and maintain respectful, collaborative, supportive and professional relationships with each other and within their communities of practice to ensure best possible regular space for reflection, learning and support. It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure that professional relationships with colleagues are conducted with mutual respect, professionalism and strive for effective communication and collaboration.

If teachers, Counselors, School Principals and the education support cadre are well prepared in the specific context of a crisis, or a post-crisis situation they are also better able to support students appropriately. Therefore it is important that the staff’s psychosocial needs are also taken into account.
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annex 1: psychosocial needs and child development

All children have a need for psychosocial well-being through an environment that positively fosters their social, emotional and intellectual development. This need will be addressed through the following:

• **secure attachments with caregivers**: children need to feel safe and cared for by supportive parents and teachers. In childhood development, belated speech development and early learning difficulties are often associated with insecure attachment. In childhood and adolescence, secure attachment remains important as a protective factor, especially under conditions of stress and violence. Secure attachment is a relational experience that slowly converts into inner strength.

• **meaningful peer relations and social competence**: Children need to acquire the social skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to create and maintain relationships with others. Peer relationships are important from early childhood onwards and are a key element of adolescence, because in this stage they often become more important than the relationship to caregivers. Therefore a capacity to develop such relationships and a capacity to avoid destructive and over-dependent relationships must be developed.

• **sense of belonging**: Children need to be socially included and feel part of the school community and environment. This sense of belonging is relevant in all life stages, especially in a surrounding shaped by threats and repeated experiences of destruction. It is also important that a young child can feel they are taken seriously, their perceptions are taken into account and that they are actively being involved in daily tasks and activities.

• **sense of self-worth and value, self-esteem**: Children need to be empowered and valued in order to think of themselves as worthy and capable of achieving desired goals. Children need to have the capacity and/or possibility to participate in decisions affecting his/her own life and to form independent opinions.

• **trust in others**: Children need to develop a belief that they can trust and rely on teachers and peers for care, help, and advice. Children need to feel that they will not be hurt by others. Trust is intimately linked to experiences of respect, and is relevant during the whole cycle of education. Most children learn to mistrust very early on and their experiences can confirm and reconfirm that grownups do not respect their confidences. Adolescents in particular need to be very carefully respected.

• **access to opportunities**: Children need to be in a supportive environment with equal opportunities for learning, development and participation with their peers. This is relevant during the whole education cycle but opportunities should reflect age. The more children grow up, the larger their radius of action and the more important it is that children have opportunities and activities that reflect their specific interests and capacities.

• **intellectual and physical stimulation**: Children need to be provided with a variety of intellectually and physically stimulating learning experiences, recreational and creative activities. Educators and other staff involved in PSS must see recreational activities as key learning situations, which should also include intellectual stimulation of any kind.
- **physical and psychological security:** Children have a need for physical and psychological health, safety and protection. Schools need to protect children from all forms of physical and psychological violence including bullying, emotional and verbal abuse and physical punishment. It is a key task of the school to provide learning in a non-violent environment and to enhance children's skills in conflict resolution.

- **hopefulness or optimism about the future:** Children need to have a realistic sense of confidence, optimism, goals and aspirations for the future. Early on this refers to strengthening children's curiosity and helping them develop their interests. Later on this refers to letting children develop and produce things on their own and to take initiative. Finally towards the end of school this refers to the joint development of working and job perspectives.

- **responsibility and empathy:** Children need to develop understanding of the implications of their own actions and demonstrate concern for the impact of their actions on others. Children do not become responsible through punishment and mistrust, but through experiences of love, empathy and respect. Newborn babies react to lack of empathy and themselves build their contact to the world on huge empathetic capacities. So children that later on are not empathetic have unlearned this capacity.

- **adaptability and creativity:** Children need to be able to adjust to their environment and to new situations. Children need to be able to creatively imagine different alternatives and options in a given situation. Chronic situations of threat and insecurity lead to less creativity and less capacity to adapt to changing demands. It is therefore paramount to stimulate creativity throughout the schooling experience.
annex 2: core competencies staff need in reference to PSS

The following are some of the core competencies essential for working adequately in the area of PSS for Palestine refugees.

1. assessment and monitoring

Assessment is understood here as a procedure to understand children in their context and identify their needs, not as a screening or labeling tool.

2. intervention and evaluation

The key dimension of any kind of intervention is the human respect shown to the student, to their right of information and confidentiality. All psychosocial support is only valuable insofar as it contributes to the empowerment of the child. Relationship building is the central feature of any PSS.

3. referral process

Ability to recognize the limitations of one’s competency and to ensure appropriate referrals, as a form of intervention to relevant agencies and colleagues wherever possible to ensure the child receives the best care possible. A referral process is only finished, once the child is receiving the necessary response.

4. emergencies

Ability to work in emergencies is important including helping confront and reflect difficulties, and focusing on empowerment perspectives.

5. ethical and professional conduct

Ability to demonstrate ethical thinking and professional conduct in all activities to ensure the best interests of children and the safety and well-being of oneself and colleagues; being able to articulate ones role, responsibilities and limits and act accordingly; being conscious of how one’s own identity and psychological situation influences their work; and using all available opportunities to reflect and work on this linkage.

6. self-care

Ability to recognize and monitor the impact of one’s work and/or personal life on one’s well-being and on the ability to effectively carry out professional duties and to take appropriate steps to ensure self-care in the best interests of children and oneself.

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9 Based on a presentation by David Becker given at the Education Psychosocial Support Forum 2021 October, 2014.
annex 3: ethics and values of psychosocial support practices

To help Palestine refugees achieve their full potential in human development, UNRWA promotes the highest standards of ethical and professional conduct. Ethics are often defined as “doing the right thing for the right reason”. All UNRWA staff are placed in a position of trust with respect to the well-being and education of children and this requires high standards of ethical practice. The following diagram shows the minimum standards of working ethically in the relationship with UNRWA, colleagues and beneficiaries.

Staff must ensure that conflicts of interest are avoided where foreseen and if they arise unexpectedly are addressed promptly in order to ensure the best interest of the child. Additionally, professionalism must be maintained in all aspects of their conduct and work in promoting integrity, honesty, accuracy and clarity.

Staff must strive for good communication and collaboration. Every staff member must contribute to building a harmonious workplace based on team spirit, mutual respect, understanding and professionalism.

Staff must communicate openly and share relevant information (subject to confidentiality requirements) with other colleagues. They can refer to and consult other more competent/knowledgeable colleagues about particular issues which are outside their competency.
relationship with beneficiaries

In the relationship with beneficiaries, staff must respect and protect the dignity and worth of each child and their family members and promote this in their work in addition to preventing and opposing exploitation and abuse of children, emotionally, financially or otherwise. All children must be treated fairly – regardless of their age, gender, or economic status. It is important to ensure that they are treated consistently and without discrimination. All complaints received by the child or their family should be promptly addressed, according to the policies and procedures of UNRWA.

Staff must ensure the confidentiality of personally identifiable details in research, counseling, monitoring or evaluation publications or promotion materials. In addition to respecting the privacy of the child and their family, they must ensure the confidentiality of information acquired in the course of their work. Staff must protect the right of the child and their family to informed consent and seek to establish explicit consent to counseling.10

10 This section is based on UNRWA (2013): Serving Ethically: Handbook on ethics and standards of conduct applicable to UNRWA personnel.
annex 4: who does what?

- **Schools Principals (SP)** steer the lives of their schools. They are responsible for the children, for their staff and for an adequate development of the school activities. In reference to PSS they participate in the planning of PSS activities including in times of emergency. Principals support the schools in meeting the needs of children and are responsible for ensuring that the overall ethos of the school is child friendly and that there is a human and respectful handling of disciplinary issues. The SP is administratively, but not technically, supervising the Counselor. The Counselor has to present their weekly work plan to the School Principal. The SP technically and administratively supervises the teachers.

- **Teachers** must provide quality child centered, inclusive practices, and identifying and responding to the needs of all children in their classroom. The teacher contributes to, and promotes, activities related to student’s educational and psychosocial development and safety. The teacher is primarily responsible for the provision of PSS to all children in the classroom while ensuring that learning promotes psychosocial well-being and addresses needs. To meet the needs of the children with additional or extensive needs, the teacher works together with the Counselor to develop activities to support the child and the Counselor works individually with the child if needed. Also it is possible to convene the SST and plan the necessary activities there.

  The inclusive education practice of the teacher is enhanced and supported by the Education Specialist. The teacher’s psychosocial practices and needs are enhanced and supported by the Counselor.

- **School Counselors (SC)** conduct trainings and activities to build the capacities of teachers in the area of PSS including in times of emergency. In addition, they support teachers in addressing the needs of all children in the classroom. In particular, they are responsible for children with additional needs, through school based support measures where they assist teachers in identifying and responding to student’s additional needs. For the children with extensive needs, in addition to the support provided to the child at school, the SC collaborates with the different UNRWA programmes for internal referrals or with other service providers outside of UNRWA for external referrals. To be efficient it is important that referral lines are clear and short. Nevertheless the School Principal needs to be informed about any referrals.

  Counselors report to the Area Education Officer. They regularly consult and collaborate with the School Principal, discuss the key issues of psychosocial concern in the school with them and inform them in general about their activities. In terms of work content, Counselors are not under the direct control of the School Principal and also have to maintain confidentiality rules towards the School Principal, except in situations of severe violence, GBV, or other life endangering situations.

- **Student Support Team (SST)** is a structure that brings together all the people necessary to deal with the additional needs of a child. Most needs of children are dealt with directly between the Counselor and teacher but in some cases a team meeting is necessary. This can include one or more of the following: teacher, Counselor, School Principal, Deputy, Health Tutor, Education Specialist and whoever else is considered helpful for the task. For
confidentiality purposes, sometimes the SST is comprised of only the School Counselor. The members of the SST will be determined depending on the child’s needs and the needed support.

- **Education Specialists (ES)** need to have a clear understanding of the inclusive education approach to learning, health and psychosocial well-being. The Education Specialist supports the teachers and schools in identifying and responding to the needs of students. Furthermore, the Education Specialist coaches a permanent teacher's PSS group, promoting the well-being of staff through providing spaces for reflection. The Counselor supervisor (if available) has the same role in the PSS groups of the Counselors.

- **Area Education Officers (AEO)** are responsible for the line management which includes communication with School Counselors and principal as well as overseeing of referral processes and linking with service providers etc. The AEO is responsible for the supervision of School Counselors.

- **The Professional Development and Curriculum Unit** assures the inclusion of PSS related issues into training activities of teachers and the development of core competencies in reference to PSS. In reference to Counselor trainings, the Unit makes sure that training activities are coherently organized to develop Counselors' capacities appropriately.

- **The Quality Assurance Unit** is key in assuring the comprehensive application of the inclusive education approach including its dimensions of PSS. The Unit has an important role in making sure that evaluation systems in and of themselves enhance the Inclusive Education Policy and do not contradict it.

- **The Assessment Unit** ensures the dissemination of best practices of Inclusive Education to support the diverse needs of children in relation to assessments. As a result, the Assessment Unit makes sure that assessment approaches are used to identify children’s needs and that data is collected on the linkage between academic achievement and any PSS needs. They should also ensure that the individual needs of children are taken into consideration and addressed in assessments.
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