SAVE THE CHILDREN’S
YOUTH RESILIENCE PROGRAMME
THE YOUTH RESILIENCE PROGRAMME was developed in 2015 by Save the Children Denmark on behalf of the Child Protection Global Initiative. It is an independent continuation of the Children’s Resilience Programme, where learning from this programme has fed into the design of the Youth Resilience Programme.

A resource kit has been developed for the Youth Resilience Programme, including:

- **The Theory and Programmatic Guide**
- **Facilitator’s handbook 1: Life skills Workshops for Youth**
- **Facilitator’s handbook 2: Parents and Caregivers Meetings**

The programme is built upon learnings and best practices gained from psychosocial support programming around the world and borrows material from several agencies, e.g. the Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative (REPSSI). We acknowledge the tremendous assistance we have received from young people, parents, caregivers, facilitators and programme staff in Denmark, South Sudan, Iraq, Yemen and Jordan in developing, testing and reviewing this programme.

*The manuals can also be found in Arabic [here](http://www.savethechildren.net).*
AT A GLANCE

WHAT is the Youth Resilience Programme?

✓ Builds life skills linked to behaviour and social interaction that are essential for sustaining the resilience, protection and wellbeing of young individuals.
✓ Consists of a series of 8-16 structured workshops conducted by the same facilitators once or twice a week, for the same group of youth.
✓ Complemented by sessions for parents and caregivers and close linkages to the communities.

WHO is the programme designed for?

✓ Boys and girls between the ages of 14 and 20 (and their parents and caregivers), but may also benefit those above this age.
✓ The level of development and the life situation of the targeted individuals will determine design and content of the programme.

WHEN should I use the programme?

✓ To ensure the best interest of young individuals, you should only use the programme when, for example:
  o Relevant assessments show that the YRP meets the needs of the target group and contributes to the desired changes for them.
  o The programme forms part of a holistic and integrated programme for adolescents and youth.
  o Referral pathways are developed and functioning.
  o There is a commitment from relevant stakeholders, including youth and their caregivers, and qualified and motivated facilitators.
  o Youth will remain in the area for minimum four weeks and can – and want – attend workshops on a weekly basis.
✓ Please use this questionnaire to assess your ‘readiness’ for using the Youth Resilience Programme.

When should I not use the programme?

✓ You should NOT use the programme in contexts where there is not enough time or stability; where young people show very high levels of distress and anxiety; and where there are no mechanisms to respond to child protection concerns or more severe mental health and psychosocial distress.

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WHAT IS RESILIENCE?

Resilience is linked but not equivalent to a young person’s wellbeing or thriving. It describes a process wider than simply ‘feeling good’, and it includes all aspects of a young person’s life. Resilience is concerning people’s will and ability to overcome challenges and develop in a healthy and positive way in spite of difficulties (‘bouncing back’).

- It is about the individual and what is around him or her (people, communities, systems, etc.). It is a dynamic process of action and interaction between individuals and their environment.
- It is about skills and abilities that can be both learned and lost. Resilience is not a set of permanent individual personality traits.
- Resilience can change over time and is bound to the specific context. What is resilient behaviour in one situation may not be resilient behaviour in another. This is because different situations demand different skill sets.

Resilience is the ability to navigate during periods of hardship, drawing on psychological, social, cultural and physical resources, which will support the person’s wellbeing, thriving and daily functioning. Resilience is also about a person’s or a group’s ability to negotiate resources in a meaningful way – to the advantage of the person or the group.

Save the Children Denmark’s interpretation inspired by Michael Ungar at the Resilience Research Centre.
WHAT IS YOUTH?

We define ‘Youth’ as a transition period between childhood to adulthood, marked by certain rituals or physical changes. It is a stage of social and physical development stretching from puberty to the acceptance of the responsibilities of employment, marriage, family, community engagement etc. This transition may happen at different times for boys and girls, in rural or urban areas, and can vary substantially from context to context.

The level of development and the life situation of the targeted individuals should determine design and content of any youth programme. This includes considering how the young people understand and process information, how they communicate and relate to others and their life situation as they transition from childhood to adulthood.
**WHAT IS THE YOUTH RESILIENCE PROGRAMME?**

The Youth Resilience Programme is a nonclinical psychosocial and protection methodology that focuses on young people’s positive coping and resilience. It is a psycho-educational and neuro-affective regulatory method with elements of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy approaches.

The programme builds key life skills linked to behaviour and social interaction that are essential for sustaining the resilience, protection and wellbeing of young individuals. This is done through a series of 8-16 structured life skills workshops, conducted by the same facilitators once or twice a week, for the same group of youth. The programme is designed for boys and girls between the ages of 14 and 20, but may also benefit those above this age.

To capture the complex interaction of personal and social factors that facilitates resilience, the programme is framed around the dimensions of:

- **I AM** (inner strength, resources and beliefs)
- **I CAN** (skills linked to behaviour and interaction, vocational/livelihood, physical and practical)
- **I HAVE** (social and interpersonal skills and support)\(^2\)

The Introductory workshops facilitates the active participation of youth to identify issues within their lives and communities that they want to address through the thematic workshops.

A critical component of the programme design is also the sessions for parents and caregivers, and linkages to the community. Such systemic approach is critical to promote internal and external protective factors and reduce risk factors in young people’s lives at an individual, family and community level.

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\(^2\) Grotberg, 1995. In the Youth Resilience Programme, the thematic workshops are divided into 8 themes. For instance, one theme is strongly focused on self-esteem among the participants (‘I AM’), whilst others put emphasis on communication and conflict resolution skills (‘I CAN’) or awareness about who can help in times if difficulties (‘I HAVE’).
OBJECTIVE OF THE YOUTH RESILIENCE PROGRAMME

The objective of the Youth Resilience programme is to promote positive coping and resilience among young individuals to sustain their protection, psychosocial wellbeing and healthy development. It seeks to build personal skills as well as protective social networks of young people at family, friends and community level.

Through a process of carefully selected games and activities, we build young people’s knowledge, skills and confidence so that they are better equipped to learn and thrive. The resilience promoting activities are selected based on modern criteria of neuroscience and other advances in child and youth development research.

The objectives of the youth workshops are to:

- Improving cooperation and peaceful interaction between youth, positive attitude to others, assertiveness and problem solving.
- Build self-esteem and a sense of belonging to empower young people to positively explore life and make healthy choices.
- Enhance positive expectations to the future.
- Enhance impulse control (in relation to aggressive behaviour and/or risk taking behaviour).
- Enhance awareness and ability to protect of oneself and peers.

The parents and caregivers sessions are designed to:

- Raise awareness and understanding of psychosocial and protective needs of their children.
- Provide parents and caregivers with skills to support young individuals as they transition from childhood to adulthood.
- Train and actively involve parents and caregivers on child protection, positive discipline, prevention of abuse, etc.
- Explore needs and resources in local community that enhances youth resilience and wellbeing.
- Explore ways to strengthen community mechanisms to protect youth.
WHERE AND WHEN CAN THE PROGRAMME TAKE PLACE?

The Youth Resilience Programme constitutes a flexible tool that can be used in both humanitarian and development contexts and as part of broader youth programmes in different locations and contexts. It is applicable to young people in and out of school and can be particularly useful in situations where youth have experienced various forms of hardship and distressing events (e.g. family violence, poverty, community unrest, natural calamities or conflict).

Careful assessment and planning is imperative to ensure the best interest and needs of young individuals and to determine where and when the Youth Resilience programme should be used. There are certain considerations worth highlighting in this regard:

- The workshop series facilitates a process and inevitably demand a certain amount of time and stability. Hence, the programme is not suitable to youth and their families in transition or in very unstable contexts.
- Individuals with high levels of distress and anxiety may need specialised mental health services or activities to reduce the stress levels before they embark on more cognitively demanding activities, such as those included in this programme.
- Mechanisms to respond to child protection concerns or more severe psychosocial distress must be in place before implementing the Youth Resilience Programme.
THE FIVE MAIN PRINCIPLES OF THE PROGRAMME

- **PROGRESSION**: The process starts out ‘light’ and become more and more and sophisticated/’serious’.
- **STRUCTURE**: The programme stretches over time with a certain period in between each workshop. The structure includes repetition whereby each workshop starts and ends in the same way.
- **RELATIONS**: All activities are conducted in groups to enhance social connectedness and peer support.
- **PLAY AND JOYFULNESS**: The activities are creative (linked to play and joyfulness) and always with a clear purpose.
- **A WELL-TRAINED FACILITATOR**: The facilitators are the role models and know how to facilitate sessions in a fun, safe and inclusive way, where the method of facilitation is as important as the activity itself.
PART OF AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO YOUTH

The Youth Resilience Programme should not be stand-alone and an end in itself, but a point of departure for further programming and engagement with adolescents and youth. The programme is a good way to start engaging with youth. It is most effective when it is part of a broader youth programme that addresses other areas of life, such as vocational and technical skills, health and socio-economic development.

Life skills such as building up self-esteem, managing emotions, promoting a positive self-image, negotiation skills, problem-solving, critical thinking and decision-making determine whether a young person’s knowledge and experiences are put to use in a constructive way for the individual and society.

Such skills promote young people’s position to access services, obtain a livelihood in the future or claim a position in society. Knowledge is also crucial to a young person’s capacity to protect him or herself.

ACTIVE AND MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH

The Youth Resilience Programme is based on the principle that children and youth have the ability and will to overcome difficulties and to learn new competencies to cope with future adversities (‘bounce back’) using their own internal resources and with the care and support of families and communities. Focus is upon the youth as an active subject who can influence his or her own world, rather than passive adaptation and survival.

This approach to resilience assumes the active engagement of the individual. The right to participation, as recognised in Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, is therefore central to the Youth Resilience Programme. This right is safeguarded through for example the four Introductory workshops, which are intended to actively involve the participants in the design of the programme and ensure that the thematic workshops (complemented with other activities as necessary) address issues important to them.
PLANNING FOR THE YOUTH RESILIENCE PROGRAMME

Before starting the programme, there are some pre-conditions and considerations that we recommend you to go through carefully:

• What are the existing community dynamics and desired changes over time? What are the characteristics of the group?

• How do youth and their communities help themselves? How can the Youth Resilience Programme contribute to holistic programming that targets the needs and rights of youth? What existing resources are there in the community for the programme to link up with?

• Is there interest and commitment from relevant authorities, community members and groups, parents, caregivers and young people themselves?

• How should the programme be adapted to be appropriate to the culture and context?

• Are the basic preconditions in place (e.g. local protection and psychosocial support mechanisms, qualified facilitators etc.)?

• How will the most marginalised and deprived young people be actively and meaningfully engaged and risk for stigmatisation managed? What are the different risks and protective factors of boys and girls (influencing e.g. access to the programme)?

• What are the capacity building needs among staff and volunteers (including facilitators) in terms of e.g. facilitation techniques, communication and dealing with difficult emotions? Is a capacity-building plan in place? Is a plan for mentoring and coaching in place?

• Are the necessary stakeholders within your organisation on-board, e.g. technical experts, monitoring and evaluation staff, etc.?

• What will happen after the Youth Resilience Programme? Is there a strategy is in place for ensuring sustainability and exit?
MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAMME

In order to measure outcomes in youth resilience and psychosocial wellbeing, Save the Children’s specially designed Youth Resilience monitoring and evaluation toolkit should be implemented as part of the Youth Resilience Programme. This toolkit builds on internationally recognised and validated psychosocial support measurements tools, such as the Child and Youth Resilience Measurement tool\(^3\) and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire\(^4\).

The Youth Resilience Programme resource kit is available on Save the Children’s Resource Centre in different languages (click here). For more information about the programme, please contact Save the Children Denmark.


\(^3\) M. Ungar & L. Liebenberg, the Resilience Research Centre (www.resilienceresearch.org)

\(^4\) R. Goodman, Institute of Psychiatry, King’s College London.