

Inter-Agency Life Skills Package for Adolescents

CONCEPT NOTE

The need for life-skills for adolescents in Kachin and Rakhine

The situation of forced displacement in Rakhine and Kachin/Northern Shan States is becoming increasingly protracted. While adolescents represent a significant proportion of the displaced populations, they have been underserved in the humanitarian response and access to formal education or livelihood opportunities remains virtually non-existent in Rakhine State and is limited in Kachin State.

Adolescents are known to be one of the groups most likely to adopt risky behaviour and exposed to negative coping mechanisms. Not addressing the specific needs of adolescent boys and girls represents a failure to protect them from protection risks such as exploitation including sexual abuse and child labour, drug and substance abuse, child marriage, risky forms of migration including potential trafficking, or use and recruitment by armed forces/ armed groups. Investing better in adolescent's protection may also prevent further instability and radicalization.

To fill this gap, several protection actors are interested in the role life-skill education may play. Life-skills education has been shown to build psychosocial competencies, critical thinking, decision-making and problem solving skills, and may help to foster a sense of personal worth and agency. Ultimately, it can contribute to behavioural change and an improved ability to make informed choices in life.

Existing initiatives and resources

In line with the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, adolescents affected by emergencies in Myanmar have the right to be provided with a consistent minimum package. In order to ensure that life-skills education interventions are not dispersed and efforts are not duplicated, the Child Protection Sub-Sector seeks to coordinate existing and future efforts.

UNICEF Education section has developed and has been using life-skills modules for out of school adolescents for a number of years, notably the EXCEL (Community-Based Extended and Continuous Education and Learning) for Out-of-School Youth, targeting 10-17 year old boys and girls. It is a 72-hour programme provided in 3 core phases delivered by trained youth facilitators. While the focus is on HIV/AIDS, the core module on life-skills is very comprehensive. In addition to the core module, there are storybooks which address some of the key child protection challenges, including Mine Risk Education, Trafficking and Peace-Building. While it is not emergency focused, it is currently being provided in three townships in Rakhine (including Myebon), but not yet in Kachin.

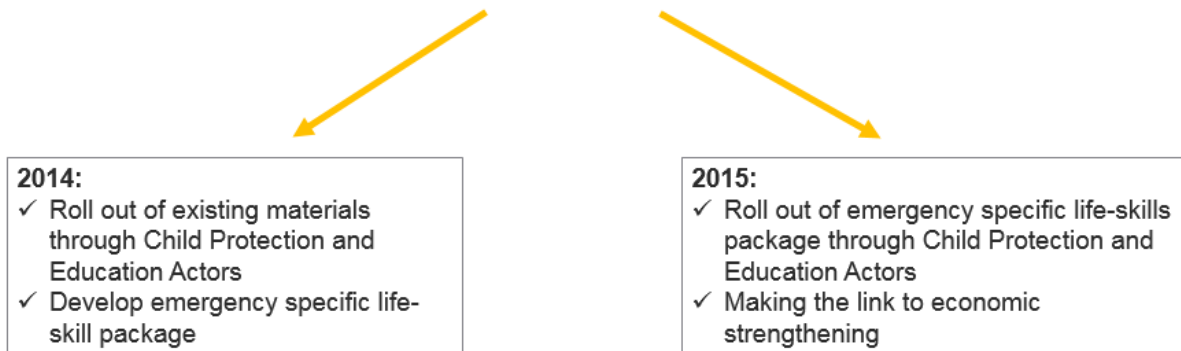
At sub-national level, the Child Protection Sub-Sector at Sittwe level has also started on coordinating their activities focusing on adolescents and is also underlining the need for a coordinated life-skills response. In Northern Shan, Save the Children has been using a five module life-skills programme for 12 to 18 year olds.

Exploring options for an inter-agency life-skills package

EXCEL, while not emergency-focused, is proposed to be used as a core module around which the Child Protection Sub-Sector can agree to add additional topical or emergency relevant modules. These additional modules can be based on existing resources such as the Save the Children Kachin package and further adapted based on field-testing feedback.

Proposed next steps

THE TWO TRACK APPROACH



Contact: Saskia Blume, Child Protection Officer, sblume@unicef.org, Phone: 012305960, Ext. 1514