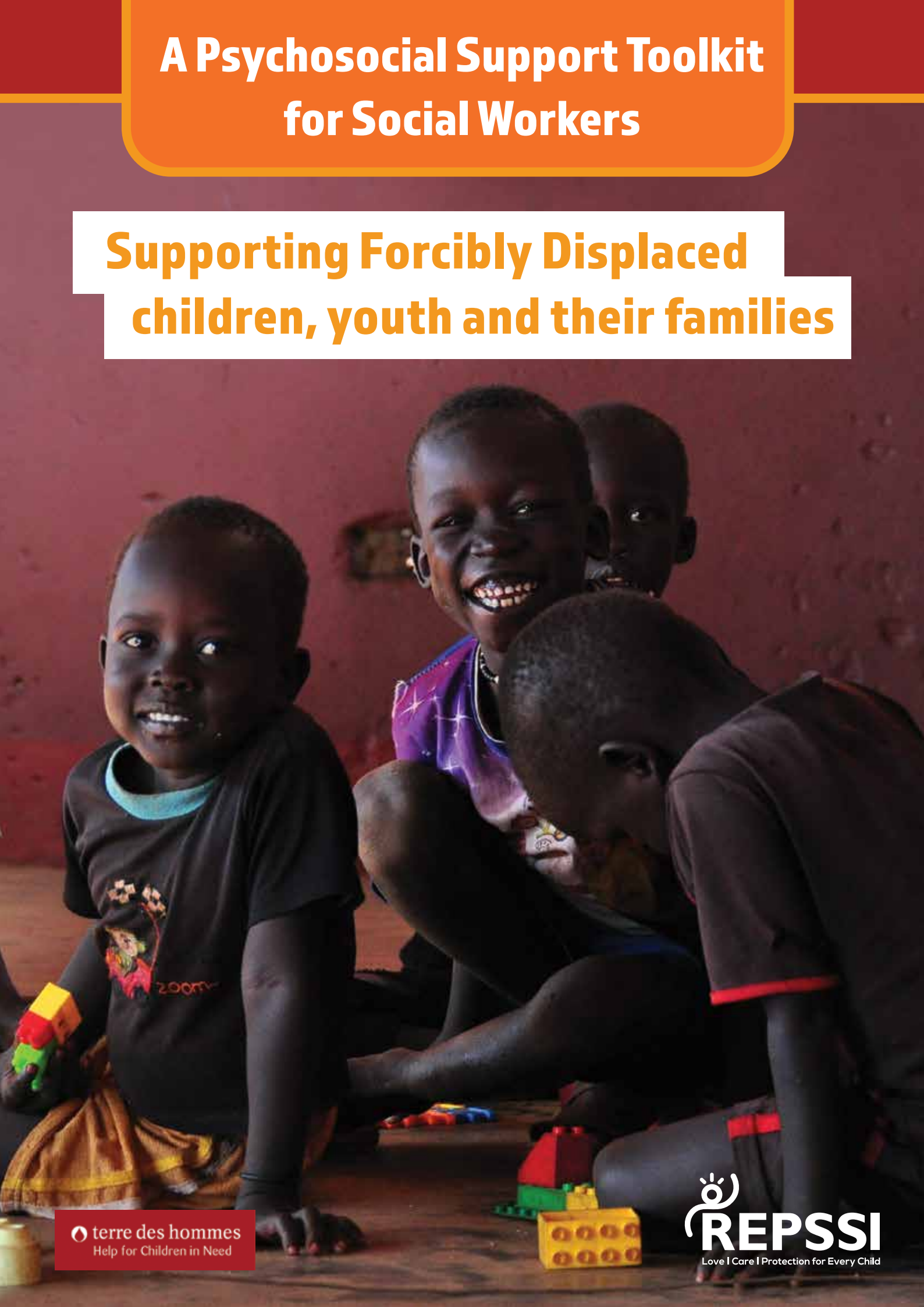
A Psychosocial Support Toolkit for Social Workers

Supporting Forcibly Displaced children, youth and their families



terre des hommes
Help for Children in Need

REPSSI
Love | Care | Protection for Every Child

About the toolkit

Social workers from non-governmental organisations and government services are often the first point of referral for children affected by forced displacement. They manage Child Friendly Spaces in refugee and internal displacement settlements, they handle case management of unaccompanied and separated children, they support children seeking education and health services, they help families cope in inner cities where displaced families often live in deep poverty in overcrowded and inadequate housing. Social workers can facilitate the integration of forcibly displaced families into mainstream society, promote their psychosocial wellbeing and help them to thrive but they can only do this if they have the appropriate psychosocial skills and knowledge about displacement and the diverse populations they serve.

The Terre des Hommes Germany, Southern Africa Co-ordinating Office identified the need for social workers in programmes supported by them and other NGOs to have specific background knowledge on forcibly displaced populations. They also wanted them to have access to the latest thinking around how to support displaced children's psychosocial wellbeing. This toolkit is based on a review of the most recent research evidence around the psychosocial (PSS) needs of forcibly displaced children and youth and discussions with social workers. It encourages a group approach to psychosocial support because the reality is that there are few psychosocial professionals available for displaced communities which makes individual counselling difficult. We also know from research that group support can play an important role in emotional and social well being.

How to use the toolkit

The toolkit is written to be read directly by social workers either alone or in groups. It can also form part of a training and we have given suggestions for trainers throughout the text. It provides a background to work with displaced families, outlines how to set up a PSS support group and then suggests exemplar and tested resources that can be used within the groups.

Acknowledgements

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Cover photo © James Clacherty

Contents

Section

1

Understanding forcibly displaced children, youth and their families

In this section you will find out:

- what it means to be forcibly displaced, a refugee, an asylum seeker or a migrant
- why children, youth and their families are forced to leave their home countries, travel on long journeys and settle in new unknown countries
- what effect this forced migration has on children, youth and their families

For a training facilitator

Divide the group into smaller groups of 3 or 4 and give each group a copy of the 4 sources of information. Once they have read and talked about them let them come back to the larger group and ask. What did you learn?

Piecing the story together Part 1: Being forcibly displaced

Social workers are experts at finding out about the lives of children and youth. On the next few pages we have given you a number of sources of information. Read them and see what you can find out about forcibly displaced children and youth.

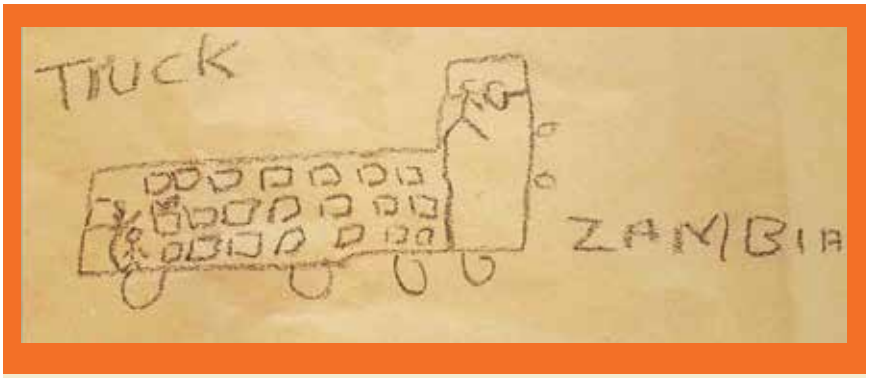
Let's begin with a story...

Jeannette is 18 and Rene is 10. They attend a regular support group at a community counselling centre in Johannesburg.[1] One of the activities they did in the group was to tell the others in the group their story. This is a piece of their story.

Jeannette: My family lived in the area in Congo where there was a war. My father was killed when he was cutting wood and bringing it to our village to sell. He used to bring the wood on a small boat on the river. My mother went to look for him and she did not come back.

There were some people in our village who knew my grandmother, who was in South Africa. They said we must go to her. So we sold the things in our house and they helped us to use the money to get

1 Jeanette and Rene (names changed) took part in research at the Sophiatown Community Psychological Service in Johannesburg, South Africa. The research can be found in Save the Children (2020) Girls on the Move in southern Africa. Save the Children Sweden. https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/18292/pdf/girls_on_the_move_southern_africa_final.pdf



a bus and then a truck that brought us to South Africa. I think I was 14 then, Rene was 7. No one said about papers and Rene and I were too young so we did not know, we did not bring birth certificates or anything.

Rene: We came in a big truck, in the back and covered by canvas. There were many of us and it was so cold and I was crying.

Rene covered her drawing of the truck that brought her from DRC with black crayon while she told us how horrible the journey had been

Rene: I got on the floor and tried to stay warm by curling under the other people. The truck driver was kind. He made sure we had food and water.

Jeannette: Yes, he was, when we had to cross the border into Zambia he told me to make it look like I was carrying a baby on my back so the border officials would let me just walk across. Rene hid in the truck. The truck driver found out where my grandmother lived – we had her phone number from the people in Congo and he took us to her house when we got to Johannesburg.

Rene: I do not like to live here because I cannot go to school. For two years I sit and feel sad. I have no papers.

Jeannette: I want to get refugee status because we had to run away because my mother and father died in the war and my grandmother here in South Africa is the only family we have who is alive. People said you must get asylum papers first. We went to Home Affairs to get asylum seeker papers but they would not give them to us. ►

► My sister could go on to my grandmother's asylum paper but she has no birth certificate to prove she is her granddaughter so they told her to go away. We are too afraid to walk around as we have no papers and the police may arrest us. When Rene was sick I was too scared to go to the clinic. We didn't go. I just say, God is always protective.

Rene: It was funny when we first got here as we knew no English. You can't talk because you don't know - so you show … even if you go to buy food you show with your hands (she laughs as she shows us her sign language for different kinds of vegetables). Then I learned to speak English. Now I just want to go to school.

February 2020

Fresh waves of unrest in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have displaced an estimated 5 million people between 2017 and 2019 – namely in the Kasai, Tanganyika, Ituri and Kivu regions. Hundreds of thousands more have fled to Angola, Zambia and other neighbouring countries such as South Africa. People are fleeing their homes at a worrying pace, as worsening violence destroys lives and livelihoods across the country. There are over 918 000 DRC refugees and asylum seekers being hosted in African countries.[2]

Many refugees from DRC are settled on land in Mantapala Refugee settlement in Zambia. This photo shows the temporary shelter and the sweet potatoes this famly has planted.

2 https://www.unhcr.org/dr-congo-emergency.html

Source: https://medium.com/world-food-programme-insight/conflict-and-hunger-gave-me-sleepless-nights-9e476485a0b1


The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) defines '**forced displacement**' as follows: **displaced** «as a result of persecution, conflict, generalized violence or human rights violations».

UNHCR defines refugees as "individuals who are outside their country of origin and who are unable or unwilling to return there owing to serious threats to life, physical integrity or freedom resulting from generalized violence or events seriously disturbing public order."

The word migrant is a general term used to describe anyone who has crossed a border (so refugees would be migrants – though they may be called 'forced migrants' because they had no choice). The word is most often used to describe people who cross borders to find work in another country. They can cross legally through border posts or informally.

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Here is another story about refugees in another country[3]

Forty-three-year-old Abu-Yousef and 36-year-old Umm-Yousef have five children aged 5 to 15. Umm-Yousef described life in Syria before the war as "beautiful". Before war broke out in 2012, Abu-Yousef was working in Lebanon, and he ended up staying there to earn livelihoods for his family.

One day, Umm-Yousef and her children were attending a wedding, and the wedding party was attacked. The bride was shot and killed, and Umm-Yousef was injured on her hand while holding one of her children. It was at this point that "life became threatening".

She began making plans to move to Lebanon to join Abu-Yousef. Unlike many families, Umm-Yousef prepared for leaving over a period of two weeks, and therefore she had time to say goodbye to their family and friends who were staying behind.

Umm-Yousef and her children's journey from Syria to Lebanon was long and challenging. The taxi they hired broke down on the road, and they were forced to walk a long distance to reach the Syria-Lebanon border.

Once they reached the border they had to cross illegally, because they had not completed the necessary paperwork. "We were really depressed. It is true we were coming to a safer place, but we left behind everything we had, our country and our belongings." Now in Lebanon, the family lives in a tented settlement. During the week, Abu-Yousef lives and works in Beirut and stays with his family only on weekends.

At the end of 2019 an estimated 30–34 million (38-43%) of the 79.5 million forcibly displaced persons globally were children below 18 years of age.

Photo: Dalia Khamissy/UNDP, via Flickr

3 https://www.outofplaceresearch.com/the-abu-yousef-family.html

Refugee law and policy South Africa

- The Refugee Act of 2000 allows asylum seekers and refugees to settle anywhere in the country and work and study.
- Asylum seekers entering the country must acquire an asylum status document at a Refugee Reception Centre. It must be renewed every six months. Refugee status can then be applied for.

Refugee status documents can take years and years to get.

- Children's Act Amendment 2007 says that an unaccompanied migrant child would be a "child in need of care" and should be brought before the Children's Court and placed under the care of a state social worker.

This law is often not applied so many unaccompanied children are never documented.

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Refugees in Zambia

https://www.clovekvtisni.cz/en/creating-a-future-for-congolese-refugees-in-zambia-6484gp

Most of the refugees living in Meheba and other refugee camps are there indefinitely, as resettlement opportunities are limited and receiving countries continue to reduce their resettlement quotas. However, many of Meheba's residents have difficulty securing even the most basic of needs, as most do not have tangible means to provide for themselves within the settlements.

Support to 5,800 Congolese refugees

As stipulated by Zambian law, refugees and asylum seekers are not allowed to work. Refugees are thus dependent on the government, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, or non-governmental organizations for support – either in the form of cash-based interventions, non-monetary distributions, or short-term employment within camps. Faced with a dearth of opportunities for making ends meet, some refugees opt to leave Meheba to seek job opportunities illegally.

Talk about this with a colleague if you can:

- Have you learned anything new?
- What have you found out about forcibly displaced or refugee families?
- What have you found out about Rene and Jeanette?
- What did you find out about Abu-Yousuf and her family? What was similar in their stories, what was different?
- Are the laws about refugees the same in all countries?

For a training facilitator

You can set the activities in the boxes as 'homework' or do them in the workshop.

A task for you to do

Find out about the laws that govern refugees and asylum seekers in your country.

Find out about the laws around unaccompanied children like Jeanette and Rene in your country.

A good place to start is to Google 'refugee law and your country name'.

Reflection

"Refugees are ordinary people caught up in extraordinary circumstances."

Imagine you have to flee your home immediately in 24 hours. What would you take with you? What would you leave? Who would you leave behind? How would you feel?

Before we move on to the next page think about your answer to this question. Discuss this with a colleague if you can.

What do you think is the main cause of psychosocial problems for refugee children and youth?

You will find out more about this on the next few pages.

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For a training facilitator

Divide the group into smaller groups of 3 or 4 and give each group a copy of the 4 sources of information. Once they have read and talked about them let them come back to the larger group and ask. Did you learn anything new?

Piecing the story together Part 2: Everyday life for the forcibly displaced

You found out in Part 1 why people become displaced and that different countries have different laws and policies for people who arrive in a country as displaced people. On the next few pages we have given you a number of sources of information about what happens when people arrive in their new countries. Read them and see what more of the story you can piece together.

This is a page from a book written by psychologists who work with refugee children.

Most people, when asked, will say that the psychological problems refugees have are related to the traumatic events they experienced in their home countries. It is true that the horrific events that many refugee children go through do have an impact on their mental state. In our clinical experiences, refugee children struggle as much with issues that happened during the perilous journey to safety and after having arrived in presumably safe countries. But other psychological problems are caused by the current context in which refugee children live – the socioeconomic hardships, the marginalization, and loss of agency. Daily stressors have as important an impact as past traumatic events.[4]

4 Simplified text based on Song SJ & Ventevogel P (Eds.) (2020) Child, adolescent and family refugee mental health: A global perspective. In Song SJ & Ventevogel P (Eds.), *Child, Adolescent and Family Refugee Mental Health* Switzerland: Springer https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-45278-0_4 p. 7

Here is an illustrated story[5] written by Elisa who is 10 years old. She is a refugee who lives with her mother and two brothers in a broken-down house in inner city Johannesburg.

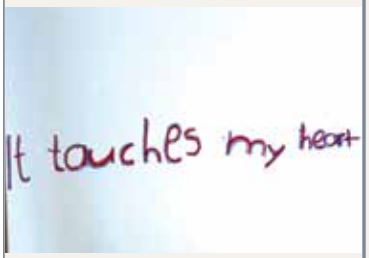
Find out how you can make books like this with the children you work with on page 52.

This is my house in Johannesburg, the door is open. There is a curtain in the door. I live here with my mum and my brothers.

This house is dirty and the glass for the window is out. When it is cold my mum puts something there, maybe it is a blanket but it is too small – we even use five blankets to sleep under.

In this house I think maybe there are 10 people. In the top there are Congo people and this side there are people from this country. They are bad to us because we come from Congo.

They say why have you got clothes that are torn and they say to my mother that she is like a devil and everyday she flies up.



That touches my heart and I feel bad. I think why are they doing this to my mum. It makes me want to leave that house.

Go back to Jeanette and Rene's story and see some of the daily struggles that they face.

5 Elisa (name changed) wrote her story as part of the holiday programme run at the Sophiatwn Community Counselling Service in Johannesburg, South Africa.

A story of change from Childline Zambia[6]

1. A 14-year-old boy by the name of Pierre and his father and stepmother ran away from DRC when their village was attacked by rebels. They ran across the border into Zambia. They spent more than three weeks at Chiengi Transit centre and then were taken to Kenani Transit centre in September, 2017.

2. After one month at Kenani transit centre, Pierre's father died and he remained with his stepmother who really took care of him and encouraged him attend lessons that were being offered at the child-friendly spaces run by NGOs although it was not formal education. Pierre and his stepmother were transferred to Mantapala Settlement where they were given land to farm but Pierre's stepmother decided to get married to a man who wanted to go back to DRC.

3. Pierre's mother was willing to go but Pierre decided to remain in the settlement so that he could continue with the free education he got at the school in the settlement.

4. While at school he met his friend, Ben, who was also a separated child. They continued to stay separately but spent most of their time studying together. Even though he committed himself to school, Pierre did not have enough books. He also had no clothes, no shoes or bedding or pots because his stepmother took most of these items with her.

5. One day a Childline volunteer spotted him going to school wearing dirty clothes and barefoot. She called him and interacted a bit. That's when she came to learn that Pierre was a separated child. The volunteer referred Pierre to a local NGO, Childline, that gave him counselling and helped him to get bedding and pots from UNHCR and to get the food ration.

6. Pierre sat for the Grade 9 end of year exams in 2020 at Mantapala B School and he was among 10 pupils from the settlement who made it to Grade 10. Childline has continued to support Pierre with educational needs and counsellors have continued visiting him.

7. Even though Pierre is still staying alone, he is happy and his passion is now to become a doctor and look after other children who are left alone like he was.

Image by reteach92 from Pixabay

A story from a Syrian family in Lebanon[7]

Thirty-eight year-old Abu-Ammar and 35-year-old Umm-Ammar have four sons and one daughter between the ages of 2 and 13. They were farmers in Syria where they grew their own food and raised livestock. The family lived through the early years of the war in Syria. At one point in the conflict, their home was bombed while the family was inside. The children became more and more terrified of the unrelenting and escalating violence. After three years, the family decided to leave Syria for Lebanon.

They fled Syria with only $1000 and the clothes on their backs. The three years they have lived in Lebanon have been very challenging for them. They were evicted from their first tented home. Also, the father's motorcycle that he used for work was confiscated due to lack of legal documentation.

They experience daily harassment from the Lebanese military and the community that surrounds their current tented settlement. Abu-Ammar and Umm-Ammar, therefore, do not let their children leave the tented settlement for fear of being attacked. They feel powerless to defend themselves in Lebanon.*"I can't stand up for my rights here. I'm in the bully's land. I can't do anything about it,"* Abu-Ammar explained.

Talk about this with a colleague if you can:

- What have you found out about the daily stressors of forcibly displaced children and youth and their families living in their new countries?
- How do you think parental stress such as that described by Abu-Ammar could affect his children?
- Could you set up parent psychosocial support groups alongside child groups in your project?

For a training facilitator

You can set the activities in the boxes as 'homework' or do them in the workshop.

A task for you to do

Find out what 'xenophobia' is. Look it up in Google or from other sources.

How is xenophobia expressed in your country?

How does this relate to Elisa's story and Abu-Ammar's story?

What can communities do to tackle xenophobia?

6 Pierre's (name changed) story was supplied by Childline Zambia social workers who work in Mantapela Refugee Settlement in Zambia.
7 https://www.outofplaceresearch.com/the-abu-ammar-family.html

Reflection

Look at yourself in the mirror. Reflect on your attitudes.

What are your attitudes to refugees, people from foreign countries or migrants? Would these affect the work you do as a social worker?

Section 2

The psychosocial impact of forcible displacement on children and youth

In this section you will find out about:

- Theory that can help us understand the impact of past and present context on the psychosocial wellbeing of forcibly displaced children, youth and their families
- How children, youth and their families, no matter their circumstances, can show resilience and develop coping strategies

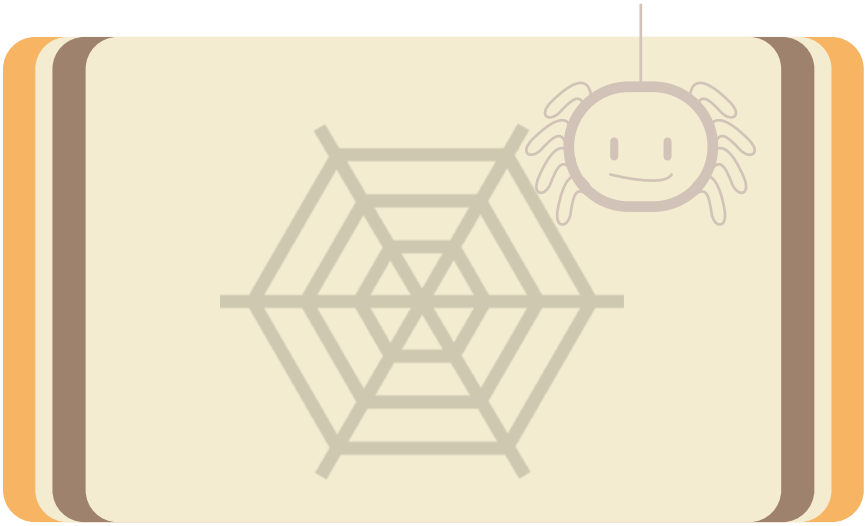
For a training facilitator

Divide the group into smaller groups of 3 or 4 and give each group a copy of the text and questions on the socio-ecological theory. Once they have read and talked about them let them come back to the larger group and ask them to tell you about the parts of the system that impacted on Jeanette and Rene's life.

Socio-ecological theory of child development

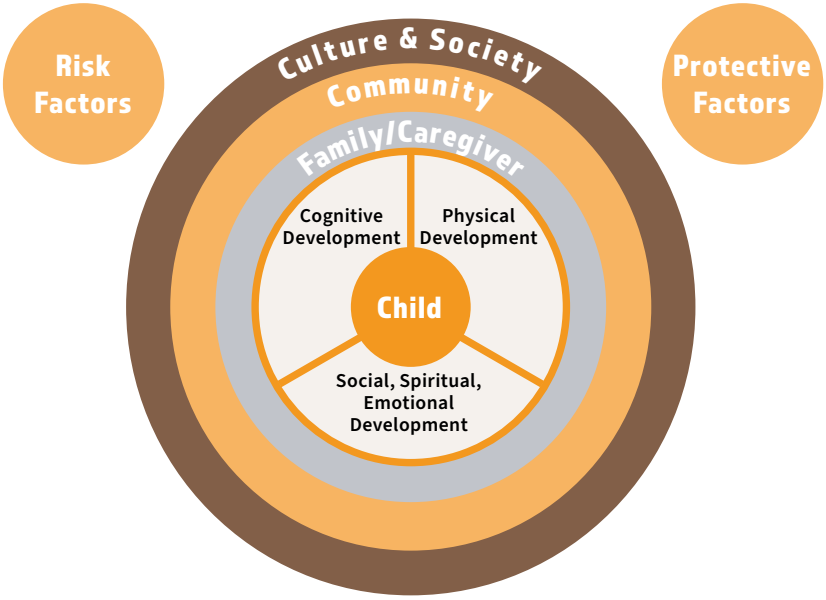
You may have come across this theory before. It is widely applied in programmes that work with forcibly displaced and other vulnerable children and youth. You will find it in many of the guidelines used by large organisations such as UNICEF and UNHCR who work with refugees around the world. It is a helpful and practical way of understanding child development as we can use it as a model to help us set up psychosocial support for forcibly displaced children.

The theory starts with a spider!!!



A child's world is a little like a spider's web. The spider sits at the centre of its web yet it can feel when something happens in any part of its web. For instance, when a fly lands on the very far edge of its web the spider still feels it.

Developmental psychologists have begun to understand children's growth and development over time as a web of circles around the child. The web is called the social ecology or the socio-ecological system in which a child grows up. It is important to remember that children in turn can impact on the systems too, for example, a child interacts with the family and the community, having an influence on it as much as the family influences the child. A child's social ecology is often shown as a diagram like the one on the next page.



Think about this theory of child development:

- How can the family influence how a child develops?
- Think of how the family environment can influence a child for the good, and then for the bad.
- How can the community and neighbourhood in which a child grows up influence them for good and for bad?
- Would having a clinic in the neighbourhood influence child development in any way?
- How would the economic situation in a country fit into a child's ecology?
- How would political conflict influence a child's ecology?

Talk about this with a colleague:

Think of Jeanette and Rene's story. What different parts of the web influenced their lives, look for both good and bad?

Think of Pierre's story what different parts of the web influenced his life, look for both good and bad?

Why is the socio-ecological way of thinking useful?

Understanding that as children grow up they are influenced by the different systems around them is useful for us as social workers as we can work systematically by looking at each circle of influence and identify how it helps or gets in the way of children's healthy development. One way of looking at this is to look at risk and protective factors.

Risk and protective factors

Look again at the diagram of the socio-ecological system. Do you notice the two circles on the outside of the diagram? What child development specialists are telling us is that there are factors in the different circles of the system that can create risk for a child as they grow up and factors that can protect them.

For a training facilitator

This activity and the one on the next page can be done in pairs in a workshop.

Talk about these questions with a colleague to help you think this through:

- Do you think Jeanette and Rene's grandmother could be seen as a risk factor or as a protective factor?
- Think about Elisa's story. Do you think the house and its social environment is a risk to her wellbeing or is it protective?
- Look at Abu-Ammer's story. Do you think the fact that he had his motorbike confiscated created risk for his children or was it a protective event?
- From the stories mentioned above, consider other situations that could be risk or protective factors and discuss them.

External resources and internal assets

Theorists have taken this thinking even further in a way that really helps us as social workers who are thinking about how to provide support to forcibly displaced children and youth. They describe the importance of two things that can provide protection for children, external resources and internal assets. The table below helps you understand what these are.

External resources	Internal assets
Nearby clinic	Self confidence
School	A sense of self worth
Recreational activities On page 53 you will find a book full of fun recreational games for children to play.	Feeling as if you belong Find out how you can help children you work with build a sense of belonging with the 'Tree of Life' activity on page 51.
Social worker	Able to communicate feelings
Caring grandmother	Able to concentrate well
Child friendly space with recreational groups	Child understands their history and why they are living where they are
Child support grant or granny's old-age pension	Feels safe
Faith community	Faith
Friends	Ability to trust people to be friends
Extended family	Able to show love to family members

- Look at the table and describe in your own words the difference between external resources and internal assets.
- Can you add any other examples?
- Think of the stories you have read to so far – think about Jeanette going to the Home Affairs Department alone – what does that tell you about her? What about Pierre, did he have internal assets to draw on?

As social workers we are responsible sometimes for making sure children have access to the external resources that will protect them. In this toolkit we are looking at psychosocial support (PSS) which is mostly about how we can build the internal assets that will help children cope with the past and present stressors that create risk in their lives.

Resilience

You have probably heard this word before. Resilience is the ability to 'bounce back' even from very bad experiences. Pierre, whose story you read earlier, shows resilience. Resilience is created when there is a balance between risks and protective factors. This means that even children who live in risky environments or have been through past traumatic experiences can have enough protective factors such as a grandmother or father who cares well for them, a counselling service nearby, a friend who supports them, or the self-strength to bounce back emotionally to outweigh the risks – so they are able to be resilient. The Childline volunteer and social worker who interacted with Pierre helped to build his resilience. One of our roles as social workers is to build resilience in individual children and make sure they live in an environment that promotes resilience.

Here is a story that illustrates resilience.[8]

I'm Ally. I am 11 years old. I was born in DRC but now I live in Jo'burg. I left my home when I was 5 years old.

I left my grandmother and grandfather behind.

Some days I am sad when I think about my grandfather who passed away. You can be sad about people you don't even know. Some days

8 From Sophiatown Community Counselling Services holiday book-making project.

I feel so sad because I think about my grandfather. I never knew him and I feel so sad because I never knew him. I have a picture of my grandmother and grandfather and me when I was small.

When I am always sad I lie down on the grass and I look at the stars in the night. The grass is in the garden at my step-grandmother's house. I feel better when I go and do that. I just lie there and feel better.

When Pedro is sad he asks his dad for money and goes to the cinema and watches funny movies. Ephraim dances, Lillian goes on her own far from other people, Grace reads and goes to another world. Helena sings church songs, Michel sings gospel …

… but I lie on the grass and look at the stars.

- What impact has being displaced had on Ally?
- What internal asset is he drawing on when he decides to lie on the grass and look at the stars when he is sad?

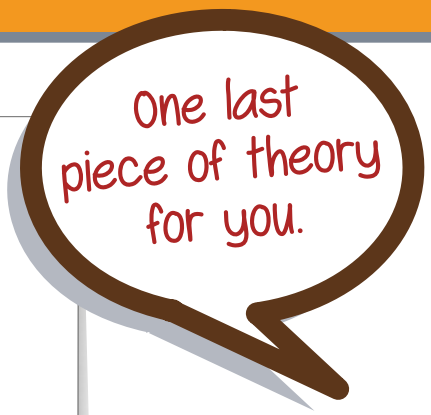
The last page of his story describes what other children in his support group do when they feel sad. Ally attends a support group for refugee children every week. One of the activities they did was to talk about actions they could take to help them feel better when they feel overwhelmed with sadness. This activity was building their resilience.

Find out about how to make a Hero Book which will help children have strategies like Ally and his friends. See page 52

A task for you to do

Think about your work as a social worker. Think of one or two children or young people you have worked with – they do not have to be forcibly displaced children. Just any child. Make a table like this one and fill it in

Risk factors in child's social ecology when you met them – to and find examples from all the circles in the diagram.	**Protective factors in child's social ecology when you met them –** try to find examples from all the circles in the diagram.
What you did as a social worker do to reduce the risk factors, how did you promote resilience?	**What you did as a social worker do to increase the protective factors, how did you promote resilience?**



Whilst we know that disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety have been shown to be high amongst refugee children and that the impact of war and displacement can make children vulnerable emotionally, this is not the whole picture. There is a growing understanding that not all forcibly displaced children are impacted in the same way – their previous life experience, their particular family, their gender, their age and the levels of violence experienced all affect the impact of war and displacement on children. We are beginning to understand that children are not all impacted equally, some children need more support than others, some children are able to process what has happened to them easily, while others need more gentle care over a long time.

- What does this mean for how we work with forcibly displaced children as social workers?
- Find out about the different levels of support that children and families may need in the next section.

Section 3

How to provide support to children and youth who have been forcibly displaced

In this section you will find out about:

- What psychosocial support is
- Different kinds of mental health and psychosocial support that forcibly displaced children may need
- The role you as a social worker can play in a mental health and psychosocial support system
- What you as a social worker can do for children who need psychosocial support
- When to refer a child for further help.

For a training facilitator

Work through the explanations of PSS and the MHPSS with workshop participants, making sure they understand them.

What do we mean by psychosocial care and support (PSS)?

PSS is a continuum of care and support that influences both the individual and the social environment in which people live. It addresses the social, emotional and psychological wellbeing of a person. It strengthens their capacity to deal with stressful events or crises. It may be preventive or curative.

It can be explained as the care and support offered by caregivers, family members, friends, neighbours, teachers, health workers and community members on a daily basis. It is characterised by ongoing respectful nurturing relationships that communicate understanding, unconditional love and tolerance.

What are psychosocial interventions?

Under normal/ideal conditions, the healthy development of most children may not require PSS in addition to the "good enough" care and support offered by their families and households. However when the capacity of a family to provide support is strained, other community members will have to step in. When this second circle of support is broken or ruptured, external agencies have a role to play by offering programmatic psychosocial care and support or interventions.[9]

Sometimes we add the term Mental Health on to psychosocial support to refer to interventions or needs that are related to more complex issues that need help from mental health professionals such as psychologists and psychiatrists. The information on the next two pages explains this in more detail.

9 Taken from REPSSI. *PSS Wellbeing Series Module 1*. REPSSI. p. 8

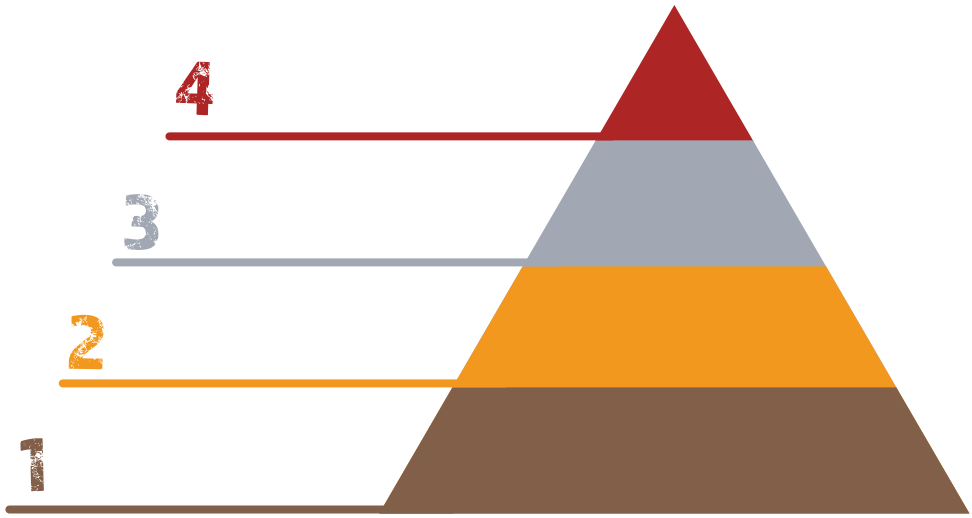
Global guidelines for MHPSS in humanitarian contexts

Organisations that work in humanitarian contexts, worked together to develop guidelines that every organisation tries to follow to give good quality MHPSS services and support to people.

A humanitarian context is a situation where there has been a natural disaster or conflict and people need emergency help. Most refugee camps, settlements and projects with forcibly displaced children would be defined as a humanitarian context.

The model of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) applied globally by most humanitarian agencies[10] is that developed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) on MHPSS in Emergency Settings.[11]

The diagram below is the IASC suggested structure for MHPSS[12]



Explaining the IASC MHPSS pyramid diagram

The **first layer** of the pyramid is the broadest. It describes activities that make sure basic services and security for wellbeing are delivered, such as water and sanitation and food. It is very important to be aware that absence of these causes psychosocial distress. Not having access to regular food or stable shelter can cause deep distress to forcibly displaced families, both caregivers and children. In fact, psychologists tell us that stress about daily needs can overwhelm parents so deeply that they cannot give children the nurturing care they need, not because they don't want to but because their distress at not being able to provide for their children overwhelms them. As a social worker your

10 e.g.UNHCR (n.d.) *Community-Based Protection and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support*. UNHCR.

11 IASC *MHPSS Guidelines*, Inter-Agency Standing Committee, Geneva, 2007.

12 United Nations Children's Fund. (2018) *Operational guidelines on community based mental health and psychosocial support in humanitarian settings: Three-tiered support for children and families (field test version)*. New York, UNICEF

first responsibility in terms of psychosocial support would, therefore, be to help families to access basic needs.

The **second layer** represents activities designed to strengthen families and communities for recovery. Forcibly displaced families benefit from activities that strengthen supports and build protective functions for resilience.[13] PSS activities by people such as teachers, social workers, parents, community members and volunteers would be in this layer. Structured PSS activities for parents and children, such as groups run for different ages in a child-friendly space in a refugee camp, a child club in a school, or a support group for parents in a faith-based organisation would fit into this layer. The rest of this manual explores activities that you can do within this layer as a social worker.

The **third layer is** more focused care which usually includes person-to-person (as opposed to group) support for distress or to maintain or enhance mental health and psychosocial wellbeing. It is often delivered by trained lay or non-specialised workers but it should be supervised by a mental health professional such as a psychologist. A social worker would often refer a child for individual counselling, some social workers are trained to do individual counselling too.

The **fourth layer** is specialised services which consist of professional care for people who have complex mental health needs or for assessment and management of mental health disorders. It should be delivered by mental health clinicians or social service professionals. At this level specialised services are provided for children and families whose care and protection cannot be managed at lower layers of the pyramid.[14]

Talk about these questions with a colleague:

- Think back to the stories in previous sections. Can you find an example of a group activity that children took part in that would fit with the second layer?
- Can you find an example of a child who received individual personal counselling? Which layer would that fit into?
- Do you recall a child you worked with who needed specialised help because they had complex mental health needs? Were you able to access this help for them? How?

13 We explore some of the evidence around this later in this review

14 Text adapted from: United Nations Children's Fund. (2018) *Operational guidelines on community based mental health and psychosocial support in humanitarian settings: Three-tiered support for children and families (field test version).* New York, UNICEF p.15

Recreational activities fit into layer 2 of the pyramid and are also important. Recreational activities could include dancing groups, a choir, a football team, a netball team or a music group – anything that is fun and helps children relax. Think about local traditional recreational activities that may be good for children.

Why would recreational activities help displaced children at an emotional level?

Structured group PSS support is a set of education activities, usually done in a group. The aim is to help children overcome difficulties they might face and build a sense of safety and psychosocial stability.

Researchers tell us that psychosocial programmes working at the second layer of the pyramid CAN make a difference for many children and families.[15] So even if you have the same problem as Audrey you can still do something that will help most children and young people. This is a comment made by an experienced director of a MHPSS NGO.

13 Silove, D., Ventevogel, P. and Rees, S. (2017) 'The contemporary refugee crisis: an overview of mental health challenges', World Psychiatry, 16(2), pp. 130–139. doi: https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.20438

"I know some MHPSS programmes have a very small professional workforce to support the people working on the ground – the volunteers and social workers who are actually interacting with the children. I have found that in these situations simpler interventions such as play, recreation and life-skills that promote interaction, normalcy and coping and resilience, are better than trying to do individual counselling. Group activities require few resources and are within the capacity of the people on the ground. If they are structured carefully to make sure children's natural emotional defences are not broken down they can have a large impact on the emotional health of a number of children."

What do you think about this comment?

Do you agree?

Section 4 of this book will lead you through the steps of setting up a structured psychosocial group support programme just like the director describes in the comment above.

Does a child need referral for extra help?[16]

As social workers you are likely to work with psychosocial support at Layer 2 of the pyramid. This means you would need to refer children who you think need extra help need to a qualified counsellor or psychologist.

Observe the child or young person:

In order to recognise distress in children and young people, you need to listen to them and observe their behaviour. Compare the child or young person's behaviour to that of other children in the same setting. Is it the same as the behaviour of other children? Of course all children respond differently but this can be a useful observation to help you identify children in particular need.

Observe the child when playing or interacting with peers:

- Does the child or young person play or interact with peers in a way that is typical for his or her age? You will find a useful summary of some of these characteristics on the opposite page.
- Does the child show a lot of anger, frustration, or fear?
- Is the child beginning to wet the bed again at night?
- Does the child cry a lot and cling to you or other people?
- Is the child or young person withdrawn or aggressive?

Talk to the child or young person about everyday things and observe how the child responds:

- Does the child or young person listen and understand?
- Does the child's understanding seem appropriate to his or her age?
- Does the child or young person appear upset and confused?
- Is he or she able to concentrate or respond to questions?

Talk with parents and other adults who know the child:

- Is the child behaving differently in any way?
- Has the child's personality, behaviour or outlook on life changed greatly?
- Do the adults think the child needs help?

16 Taken from: p. 31 IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support and Save the Children '*Booklet 1: Understanding children's wellbeing*'. *The Children's Resilience Programme: Psychosocial support in and out of schools*,' published by the IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support and Save the Children.

Challenges for social workers

Audrey[17] is a trained social worker who works in a PSS programme in a refugee camp in southern Africa. She tells us here about one of the challenges she faces.

"I work for a local national NGO in a refugee camp. The camp has over 16 000 people who have escaped the war in DRC in the last four years living in the settlement. I manage activities in the Child Friendly Spaces and a group of volunteers who do home visiting. I have one colleague who is a trained counsellor who assists me. The children and women in this camp have been through a lot and I often feel inadequate to counsel them myself but there is no psychologist in the camp. There is a psychiatrist who visits once a month from the Department of Health in a nearby town. His transport and a per diem is paid by our NGO. If there is no funding for his visit, he does not visit."

The problem Audrey describes is a common one. This is a quote from a research article:

"Most refugees reside in settings where skills and resources in mental health care are in shortest supply."[18]

Talk about this with a colleague.

17 Not her real name.

18 Silove, D., Ventevogel, P. and Rees, S. (2017) 'The contemporary refugee crisis: an overview of mental health challenges', *World Psychiatry*, 16(2), pp. 130–139. doi: https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.20438.

There is an awareness of this issue amongst international and national NGOs and there are advocacy programmes around the need to increase the MHPSS workforce in humanitarian contexts such as refugee camps.

A task for you to do

Find out about this advocacy work and maybe join it. Look up these organisations:

Global Social Service Workbook Alliance
http://www.socialserviceworkforce.org/

MHPSS Collaborative
https://mhpsscollaborative.org/

Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action
https://alliancecpha.org/en

Caring for yourself

Being a social worker is a demanding job. It is essential that you look after yourself—both for your own sake and so that you can do the job well. We sometimes forget that looking after ourselves is just as important as it is to look after others. You also might think that it is selfish to take care of and support yourself. But you need to care for yourself so that you can keep on caring for others.

Self-care should be something you do all the time—like any healthy habit. You need to think of ways in which to do so regularly, not only when there is a crisis. There are also times when you need to be especially kind to yourself and think about our own needs, for example when you are grieving after having lost someone important in your life.

Self-care activities should help us feel:

Relaxed—letting go of or expressing our stresses and feeling calm;

Rested—having more physical energy, enough sleep, exercise;

Creative—giving expression to talents, wishes, dreams;

Renewed—having more energy mentally, physically or spiritually.

Here are some ideas of ways of caring for yourself:

- Find a group of colleagues who work in similar settings and meet once a month to share the triumphs and challenges of your work. Set up an open and non-judgmental environment in the group
- Seek out regular supervision from an experienced colleague who can give you advice.
- It can help to keep a personal journal to record your thoughts and emotions about your work.
- Take time off to do something you enjoy such as walking or dancing or doing a craft.
- Exercise regularly.
- Eat healthily.

Section

4

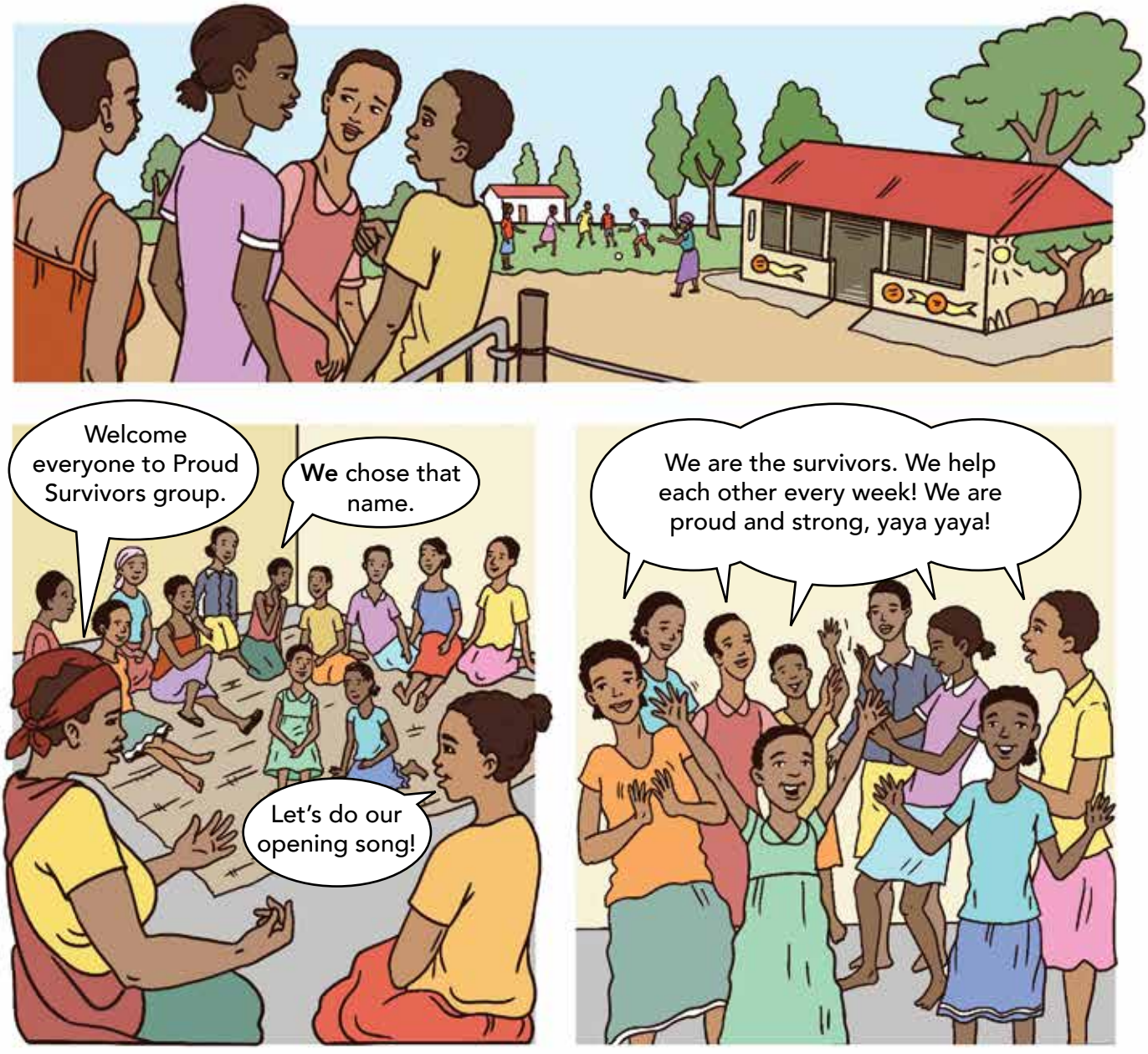
Planning a structured PSS programme for forcibly displaced children & youth

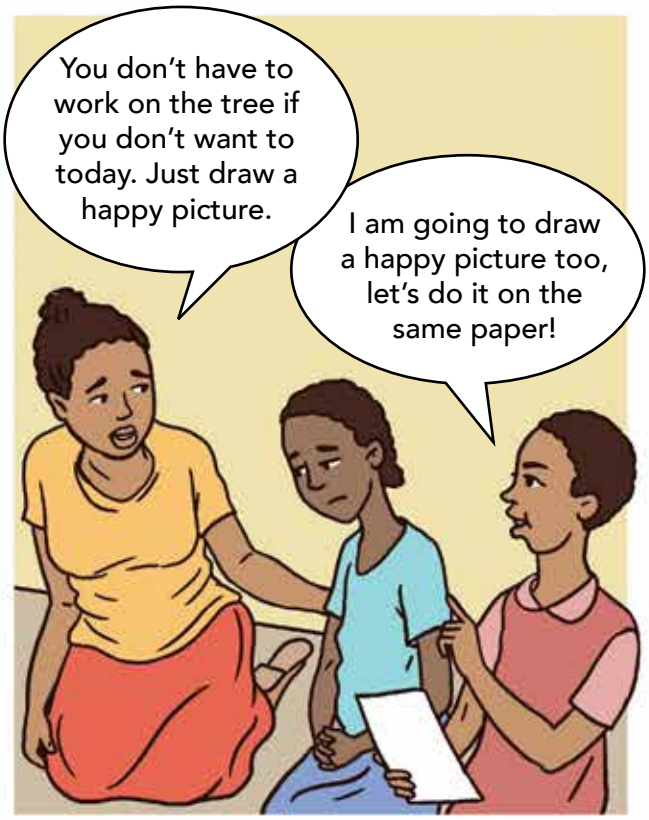
This section will take social workers through a step-by-step process with activity templates to plan a comprehensive PSS programme.

Working in groups for psychosocial support

This picture story is about a regular PSS support group run in a child-friendly space in a refugee settlement. The same kind of group could be run in a school after teaching hours and in a church or at a support centre.

The girls arrive at the Child Friendly Space for their weekly meeting.





After those who chose to have talked...

At the end of the meeting...

Talk about the story with a colleague:

- Does the group meet regularly?
- How many in the group?
- What age are they?
- How many facilitators are there?
- Why would the facilitator let the girls choose their own group name?
- How did the session begin? Did it begin that way every week? Why do you think the facilitator always starts the group the same way?
- What activity were they doing?
- Why did the facilitator let the sad girl choose not to draw?
- What examples could you see of how the group had created peer support for the girls?
- What happened after the Tree of Life reflective activity? Why?
- How did the group end? Why?

The group is working on the Tree of Life Activity. See page 51

Important things to keep in mind when doing group PSS

You already know these from reading the comic but here are the main things to keep in mind when you do group work

1. Think carefully about **where you will work** with the group. Look for an open room with no chairs and tables as this will allow you to play games. Use mats for the children to sit on and draw or listen to stories. It can be under a tree on mats but it needs to feel confidential and away from other people, children will not enjoy being stared at by people passing by.
2. Having **two facilitators** is a good idea so you can support each other and also reflect afterwards on how the group meeting went.
3. **Fifteen** is a good number for a group as it is manageable and allows for discussion and games.
4. Each group meeting should last about **one and a half hours** as this will allow time for games and a key activity.
5. Make sure the group is made up of children or youth of a similar **age**.
6. Think about **gender.** Young children under 12 will be happy to work in a mixed gender group. Usually it is best to split older boys and girls by gender unless you want cross-gender discussions. You may, for example want young men to hear how young women feel about

gender-based violence then you would mix genders. Of course you need to think about what is appropriate in your cultural context.

7. **Group identity** is created through allowing the children or young people to choose their own name. Belonging to a group is really important for displaced children, who may not feel that they belong anywhere. (See activities on page 42)
8. **Ritual** is VERY important – the opening and closing rituals make the children feel safe and they are repeated every week. Many displaced children have experienced and are experiencing chaotic lives so normal, repeated activities are very important in their lives.
9. Children who are emotionally stressed can find t**ransitions** difficult – that means moving from one activity to another needs to be flowing – always be ready with the next instruction, don't leave the children waiting around doing nothing. One way to do this is to make a ritual of packing materials away or getting materials ready with a special song – this will work with teenagers as well as children – you just need to choose the right song.
10. Play a fun game at the end of the meeting to make sure that any emotions that were raised during the meeting are **contained** so the children did not go home feeling sad or overwhelmed by emotions.
11. One of the aims of structured PSS groups is to create **social networks** of support for children even outside the group. So the activities need to encourage group interaction so children can make friends with each other.

Be gentle[19]

A loud authoritative voice is not what we want. We want children to feel safe and relaxed in the group. We do, though have to manage them as 15 excited 9-year olds can be noisy and jumpy. So, find a beautiful sound to attract the children's attention when you want to bring the group together. A **soft** shaker instrument, a simple clapping rhythm with your fingers (not your full hands), rubbing your hands together, a gentle song. Don't use it too often or it will lose its power. It can be soft because one or two children will notice then a few more and slowly the group will quieten and stand still and even join in.

19 Adapted from: R. D. Macy, D. J. Macy, S. Gross. & P. Brighton. *MENA-UNICEF Manual - V1.01* Prepared by Center for Crisis Psychology, Norway. (p. 11 &12) 2002.

Choice to participate

Did you notice the sad girl in the comic story? The facilitator let her choose if she wanted to participate. This was to provide **emotional protection**. This young woman may need face-to-face counselling as she may be more affected psychologically than the others in the group. Children (and adults) put up defence mechanisms such as not talking to protect themselves from overwhelming emotions. It is very important that unless we are trained as counsellors that we do not break these defences down as they allow children to function in their everyday world. Always give the children and young people a **CHOICE** about participating in anything. Of course the facilitator could do a home visit or keep an eye on this girl in future and refer her.

You need to remind yourself that when children (or caregivers) come into a group they bring with them the stresses both past and present of their lives, they don't leave them at the door. These stresses can affect their behaviour in the group, they may be cheeky, silent, angry or overly talkative. You need to see these behaviours as responses to, or symptoms of the deep stresses they face. Remember they are not directing negative behaviour at you and the group. Think about how you can help them within the group which is a safe space to express some of these feelings.

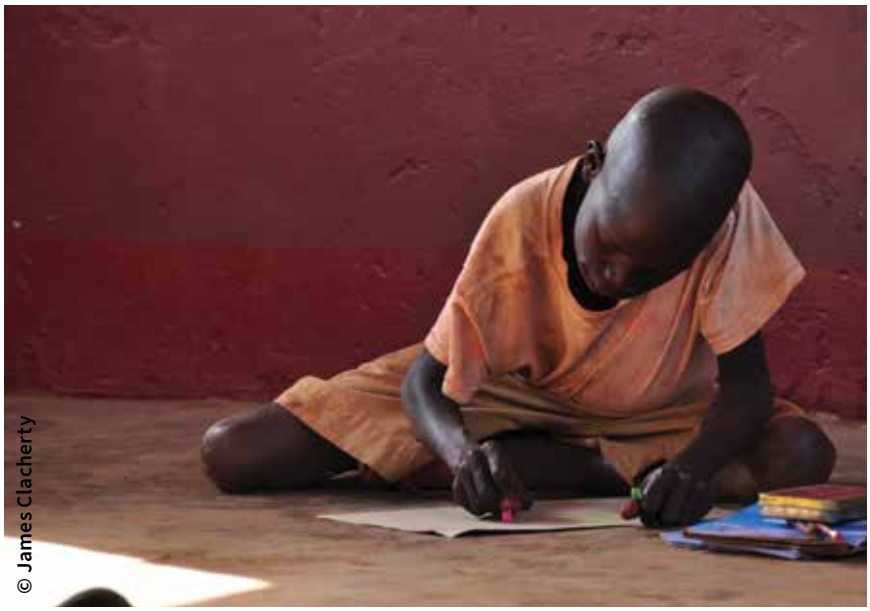
What activities to do in the PSS support group

You now have some basic understanding about how to run a regular PSS support group but what will you do during the meeting? We have suggested a number of existing programmes that have been tested and used in many different settings, including with displaced children on page 51 of this toolkit. Obviously the activities will also depend on the age of the children or young people. Most of the existing programmes we suggest can be used with all ages.

There are a few *key* activities that promote children's psychosocial well-being and safety that you should include in each group session you run. These activities support children in their recovery from stressful events. They also develop children's life skills, such as building relationships and coping with their emotions. Very importantly, they also help to make children feel safe in the group. These key activities include:

- Creating a group identity
- Building social interactions
- Relieving emotional stress
- Understanding and controlling feelings
- Identifying supports and strengths

We discuss each of these in turn below and give you a number of activities you can choose from each time you run a group.



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A great resource – download this!

https://pscentre.org/?resource=activity-catalogue-for-child-friendly-spaces-in-humanitarian-settings

Look at the contents page of this reource and you will see it is very similar to the list we have given you on the opposite page.

There are many activities in this resource. They are simple and the instructions are easy to read.

Find a way to download this resource – you will use it a lot!!!

Creating a group identity

Displacement leaves children feeling they do not belong anywhere. Even very young children feel the loss of home. Children mourn the loss of places they knew, people they knew and lives they knew. They also have to cope with new and often very different living circumstances. Look back at the stories of Elisa, Abu-Amar and Pierre. They face xenophobia which can be verbal and even physical. This means they often feel as if they do not belong anywhere. The older children feel this particularly as they are beginning to form their own sense of identity and feeling they do not belong makes this normal process difficult.

One important way to counter this feeling is to build their sense of belonging to the support group, where there are other young people who feel like them. This is what a young man from Zimbabwe said about the experience of joining a support group.

"I realised I am not alone, that they are like me and they have lived through some of the things that I have. This is not something that I could have ever thought of, that I could have friends, that I could be with other people and they would accept me."

Choosing a name for our group

At the first meeting of the group let the children or young people choose a name for the group. Then do some kind of activity that builds the idea of them belonging to the group. Here are some ideas.

Make a group bracelet

Younger children and girls (and possibly teenage boys too) enjoy making a friendship bracelet from beads or plaited threads.

Make a group banner or paint a mural

You can also make a banner to put up on the wall in the place where you meet. Use 'wood glue' and cut-out cloth pieces to make the banner. You could also paint a group mural on a wall.

It doesn't really matter what it is that you make – what is important is that the group does it together, have fun, get to know each other and build a sense of identity.

"One of the ways I build a feeling of belonging is that every week if someone is missing from the group I ask the others where they are and if they have seen them during the week. I ask them to tell the missing member that we missed them at the group."
– (Social worker)

Building social communication

Children and young people who have been displaced often feel unsure about trusting others and communicating with people. They have lost the social networks that they grew up with in their country of origin and the chaos of journeys and new places can affect their confidence. You can build their ability to relate to others and begin building new social networks of friends through the group.

Games, games and more games

Games and play are one of the best ways of helping children relax and make friends with each other. Download this book and print it! It is full of simple, fun games for helping children get to know each other. It is available in French, English and Spanish.

https://childhub.org/en/child-protection-online-library/laugh-run-and-move-develop-together

Below you will find a very special quote from a book about how to support children and youth who have survived difficult events.

Why is play important for displaced children?[20]

"No matter what has happened to them, most children still want to have fun, to engage in play; they still need to have fun in order to grow well. So perhaps the most important thing adults can do for youth survivors is to **give them the permission to play**. Think of giving youth permission "to play" in the same way as giving them permission "to leap, to jump up". How many children in the world, no matter their circumstances, will spend hours jumping on the bed, jumping from walls, jumping from boxes and trees, jumping over a rope and jumping on each other. Leaping allows youth to abandon the reality of the world, if only for a moment. Leaping can safely challenge all the rules, if only for a moment.

Allowing youth survivors to play, giving them the structured opportunity to play games and be part of challenging creative activities, will usually let them regain a positive sense of themselves and their world, especially when they play in peer groups, acting as witnesses to the leaping, to the fact that there is still simple joy in the world. When adults give the permission to play and adults participate in the play, youth survivors begin to reconnect to the adult world with a new sense of trust, understanding and calmness."

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20 From R. D. Macy, D. J. Macy, S. Gross. & P. Brighton. MENA-UNICEF Manual - V1.01 Prepared by Center for Crisis Psychology, Norway. (p. 13) 2002.

Relieving emotional stress

Have you ever been in a very stressful event? You will have noticed that either as the event happened or after it, your thoughts raced, you felt high emotions, you may have felt changes in your body such as sweating, your heart racing or blood rushing to your face. You may also have behaved differently from normal, you could have got angry and yelled at someone or got quieter and quieter and isolated yourself. These are all normal responses to highly stressful events. Many children who come to a child-friendly space or a group may feel this stress almost all the time or every time they recall something that happened. It is important to help children and young people (and adults) to understand how stress and relaxation feel in the body, and to give them some tools they can use to calm themselves every day. Being able to calm themselves will give them a feeling of power over their own bodies.

Activity: Fast or slow[21]

The AIM of this activity is to be aware of the feeling of calm as the opposite of fast or stressed.

1. Ask the children to stand in a circle with a lot of space between each other
2. Have the children shake their body – starting with their hands, then their arms, legs, torso, head. Shake all parts of the body. Then walk on the spot, then run. Let them run on the spot for at least one minute.
3. Next, ask the children to stand very still.
4. Say: Feel what's happening to your body. Feel your heart beating. Feel the tingles in your belly and legs and arms. Feel the heat in your body. This is your body going fast. This feeling can be similar to how you feel when you are very excited, or even afraid.
5. Say: Sometimes when we're excited or afraid, we might find it hard to calm down. In these situations, it can help to remember that you can also be calm. Sit down slowly and close your eyes. Think of the floor beneath your sitting bones. The floor is steady. Can you feel it? It is holding you as you sit.
6. Say: Sometimes in life we can find it hard to have that calm feeling. Breathing can help us be calm. I am going to teach you a good

21 Adapted from World Vision International and the IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support. 2018 *The Activity Catalogue for Child Friendly Spaces in Humanitarian Settings* p. 63.

breathing exercise. You should do it ever morning when you wake up and before you go to sleep.

Two simple breathing activities

Practice one of these every time you meet the group**:**

Hissing breath[22]

This works well even with young children as the hissing sound makes it easy to slow down the out breath.

1. Sit quietly with your eyes closed.
2. Breath in deeply through your nose.
3. Breath out of your mouth making a small hiiissssssssssssssing sound like a balloon slowly losing air. Do this veeeeery slowly trying to make the breathing out last 10-15 seconds or more.
4. Repeat it at least five times.

Adolescents may feel shy to hiss – you can ask them to breathe out as if they were blowing a candle – make sure they do it slowly, slowly.

Humming breath[23]

1. Place one hand on your belly, and place the other on the bone in the middle of your chest.
2. Take a deep breath and hummmmm while breathing out. Feel the vibration of the sound as you hum and let it calm your mind.
3. Repeat this about five times.

Relaxing to music

Young people enjoy this activity.

1. Play some gentle music on your phone. Something you like that helps you relax – be aware that if children in the group are of

22 https://move-with-me.com/self-regulation/4-kids-yoga-brain-gym-breathing-techniques-that-develop-self-regulation/
23 https://move-with-me.com/self-regulation/4-kids-yoga-brain-gym-breathing-techniques-that-develop-self-regulation/

different religions that you should not choose a religious song.

2. Ask the children to lie on the mats on their backs with their eyes closed. Do one or two hissing breaths together and then just lie and listen to the music.

Understanding and controlling feelings[24]

Emotional learning is a fundamental psychosocial skill for all children. Learning how to manage difficult emotions is very important for children who have been through stressful events in their lives. You need to do activities that help children:

- Recognise and name a feeling they have
- Understand that we all have different feelings and feelings are not 'good' or 'bad'
- Help them to recognise the feelings of other people
- Help them see that we can choose to change our feelings. Give them activities that will allow them to find personal strategies for changing feelings of anger, sadness etc.

Look on page 51 for the Hero Book activity. This has a section on identifying tricks for changing emotions.

The Activity Catalogue we told you about on page 42 has a section with activities for each of these.

Here is a great tool for helping children and young people learn about emotions during other work you do in the group.

Make an emotion circle together

1. Cut some strong card or paper (it will need to last over the whole year) into a large circle about the size of two flip chart pages. Divide it into six slices.
2. Ask the children if they can name some emotions. Ask them to describe the emotion – let them use their body and voice to describe the emotion. What does your body look like when you are sad, angry etc? What does your voice sound like?
3. Write and draw small cartoon faces to show six emotions on each of the slices of the large circle: anger, sadness, disgust, fear, happiness, surprise. These are generally common emotions that

24 Adapted from World Vision International and the IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support. 2018 *The Activity Catalogue for Child Friendly Spaces in Humanitarian Settings* p. 49.

can be recognised across cultures but it is very important to adapt the number and type of emotions appropriate to the language and culture of the children in your group.

4. Ask the children to use crayons to draw patterns and colours to illustrate each emotion on the card. Talk about the emotions as you do this – asking them to show in their body and voice how each emotion looks and sounds.
5. Have a box of clothes pegs ready for use on the wheel.

Use the wheel throughout your group sessions. After a fun game ask the children what emotion they are feeling – if they say 'happy' take a clothes peg and clip it on the edge of the 'happiness' slice of the emotion circle. When a single child is looking sad or gets angry you can ask them to place a peg on the feeling they have. If you want to check how everyone is feeling at the end of a difficult session ask everyone to put a peg on the feeling they have now.

Identifying supports and strengths

Do you recall the work we did on resilience? One of the aims of a PSS group is to build resilience. It will do this in many ways, like helping children to identify feelings and to calm their stress but you can also help them to be aware of the supports and strengths they do have.

An artwork of 'I am, I can, I have'

1. Hand out art materials such as paint or wax pastels, something that is bright and easy to use such as large paint brushes and thick crayons so the children and young people can work expressively.
2. Hand out three cards. With the following written on them. I am, I can, I have.

   Say: You are going to use the art materials to show on the **'I am' card** the things you have in yourself that you are proud of – you may be clever or confident or kind or neat or good at running – any characteristic inside you that you are proud of.
3. Once they have finished this card,

   Say: on the 'I can' card make an artwork to show a skill, something you do really well, like I draw well, I can do maths, I can cook a meal, I can chop firewood – any skill you are proud of.

4. Say: On the last card 'I have' you will make an artwork about a person or place or thing that helps you to be strong, your grandmother, your church, your holy book, this group, your friends, music – something that supports you.

You can use multiple art materials in many of the activities on page 51 such as the Tree of Life or Storybooks.

Using art

Art making is a wonderful tool for helping emotionally vulnerable children. Making something visual with their hands allows children to relax, it also creates a product which makes them feel a sense of control and pride. Working with images instead of talking also keeps children safe from overwhelming emotions. They can draw a traumatic event, for example, and in this way externalise it. Remember to give them the choice to talk about it. In fact art is helpful for children in itself, it does not need to be talked about.

You can do simple drawing if all you have is crayons but if you can, try to build up a collection of different art materials. You can do this without spending a lot of money. The more touching and layering of materials the more it allows them to process difficult emotions and events.

You will find a list of useful art materials at the back of this book. Encourage the children to layer the materials. For example, glue magazine pictures down, then use a black pen to draw on them and then food colouring paint to paint over them. Each layer allows them to deal with a layer of emotion related to the event or feeling they are thinking about

Existing resources

This toolkit has given you a few core ideas for activities. You will need to choose one or more of these resources to use with your support group. All of these resources have been tried and tested in work with forcibly displaced children. You can download all of them off the Internet. We have given you links to do this.

Resources for PSS for ages 10-18

Tree of Life (REPSSI)

The Tree of Life is a psychosocial support tool based on Narrative Practices. It is a tool that uses different parts of a tree as metaphors to represent the different aspects of our lives. The use of metaphors and carefully formulated questions invite children and others to tell stories about their lives in ways that make them stronger and more hopeful about the future. While it was not designed as a "bereavement tool", it opens up space and has been used extensively with children in different contexts to facilitate conversations about loss and bereavement. The tool allows children severely affected by HIV and AIDS, poverty and conflict to tell, hear, and explore stories of loss without remaining trapped in expressions of grief and bereavement. It simultaneously opens up spaces and opportunities to tell, hear and explore stories of hope, shared values, connection to those around them as well as to those who have died.

https://repssi.org/product/tree-of-life-global-edition-a-workshop-methodology-for-children-young-people-and-adults/

World Vision International and the IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support. 2018 The Activity Catalogue for Child Friendly Spaces in Humanitarian Settings

This is the perfect resource for running a PSS group that deals with the issues we have described in this toolkit. There are many activities in this resource. They are simple and the instructions are easy to read. Find a way to download and print this resource – you will use it a lot!!!

https://pscentre.org/?resource=activity-catalogue-for-child-friendly-spaces-in-humanitarian-settings

Making a Hero Book (REPSSI)

Published by the Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative (REPSSI), this book offers a series of autobiographical storytelling and art exercises, designed to support children and youth to identify a significant psychosocial obstacle standing in the way of their goals, and to find ways to gain power over this obstacle. By doing this and creating Hero Books, children find solutions to the personal and social challenges they face. During the process of making Hero Books, children learn to share some of their inner world and life story, which helps facilitators to learn more about them, and encourages narrative and solution focused therapies. Each exercise has a different purpose and include elements of history taking, history making, and community mobilisation. The basic method involves inviting children to make a book in which they are the authors, illustrators, and main characters. However, to make the process safer for children, they don't have to use their real names, either as the author, illustrator, or main character. Hero books can be 'the truth', 'based on the truth', or 'completely made up'. It is up to the author to decide.

https://repssi.org/product/note-simplified-hero-book-activity/

Making storybooks with children

This resource was written for the care workers at the centre. You can download it at https://childprotectionforum.org

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Working with Children and Their Environment: Manual of Psychosocial Skills (Terre des Hommes)

A manual for facilitators of PSS programmes developed to answer the questions: which are the skills needed by professionals working with children? How can they be improved and afterwards assessed? Because today we know that special skills are required to best help vulnerable children develop their self-confidence and autonomy. The training modules allow development of the skills wanted. Based on a method of learning by doing, these modules propose activities where each participant can experiment with theoretical ideas such as resilience, perception or active listening, as well as more practical, playful or creative activities. This manual is directly inspired by the experience gained in more than five years with the project "Protection/

Psychosocial" in several emergency contexts (in particular in Iran, Colombia, Sudan) and development contexts where TdH works

https://childhub.org/en/child-protection-online-library/working-children-and-their-environment

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Laugh, Run and Move Together: Games with a Psychosocial Aim (Terre des Hommes)

This manual, a compilation of 20 games, is not trying to be yet another games manual describing sport activities to be done with children for recreation. The idea is to provide those in charge of children a play tool which integrates the psychosocial approach and uses the phases of learning by experience.

https://childhub.org/en/child-protection-online-library/laugh-run-and-move-develop-together

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A resource for adolescents

All of the activities we have given you in the toolkit can be adapted for all ages, as can the resources listed below. You may, though want to use a resource especially developed for adolescents. This is a good one.

Save the Children (2015) The Youth Resilience Programme: Psychosocial support in and out of school

This is a resource kit with guidance for designing and implementing youth programming that aims at promoting positive coping and resilience of young persons.

https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/9923/pdf
facilitators_handbook_oco_life_skills_workshop_for_youth_web.pdf

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Resources for use with caregivers

Though we have not discussed this in the toolkit it is always useful to engage with the caregivers of children in your support groups. Meetings with parents can build their ability to support their children, help them learn skills for dealing with emotional stress and also build their social networks, all of which will benefit their children. These resources give you ideas for running group meetings

The Youth Resilience Programme Resource Kit. Facilitator's handbook: Parents and Caregivers Meetings. (Save the Children)

'The children's resilience programme: psychosocial support in and out of schools' is a joint initiative of Save the Children and the Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (the PS Centre). The aim of the programme is to enhance the psychosocial wellbeing and protection of children. The programme recognises the key role of parents and other caregivers, teachers and community providers and seeks to equip them in the care and protection of the children in their communities. During crisis events and in the longer term, schools and other children's programmes (such as child-friendly spaces, children's clubs, youth clubs) become important sources of stability and care. Children's resilience programmes can be run in schools or in other community-based groups and can be integrated into the classroom curriculum or conducted as activities outside the classroom.

Section B of the Facilitators Handbook provides on overview of the four suggested meetings with parents and caregivers of the children participating in the workshops.

https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/sites/default/files/documents/facilitators_handbook_1.pdf

Art materials

This list is made up of materials that would be ideal – you can still do many of the activities in the toolkit and in the existing resources without art materials. Paper and crayons are necessary though. The materials listed here are not expensive and can be found in most large towns or cities. Many of the materials are waste that you can collect over time. Look after your materials and teach the children to look after them too (this is part of making order out of chaos and is actually a psychosocial activity).

Scrap paper from an office

Flip chart paper

Card – flattened cardboard boxes can be really useful.

Glue – wood glue from a hardware store is the best. Try and buy in a large container and decant into small containers or into saucers as this is cheaper.

Paint – the best and simplest paint to use are the finger paints sold for use in pre-schools as these are pre-mixed. Never give children and young people a whole pot – it will get spilt and mixed with other colours and wasted. Collect small yogurt cups and decant a few spoonfuls of each colour into a cup.

Paintbrushes – buy the thickest art brushes or the thinnest from a hardware store. Give each child one paintbrush and a cup of water to clean the brush between colours. Always wash brushes after each meeting as they soon get hard and useless.

A bucket and some plastic bin bags for putting all the paint tools in to wash once the group has left.

Oil pastels – if you can afford these they are wonderful and children love to use them. Buy some plastic containers to keep them in and make sure children put them away after using as they can often get trodden on and are then useful. I have some oil pastels that have lasted me a whole year of use with four different groups every week.

Wax crayons – try and buy the softer ones as they make a darker and more pleasing mark. Keep them in containers too.

A few small scissors.

Magazines. I find that tearing pages out of the magazine and giving children a pile to use for sticking on to a picture is better than giving them a whole magazine – they often spend more time reading the magazine than doing the activity.

Coloured marker pens – if you can afford them they make a lovely mark on top of glued pictures from a magazine. Again, you have to look after them. Make sure all the tops are on and they are in their container before the group ends or they will soon dry out.

Collect all kinds of scrap objects such as tinfoil chip bags, bottle tops, shells, buttons, beads, dried leaves and flowers, seeds, anything that can be used to layer on to a drawing, painting or collage.

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