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KNOWLEDGE BRIEF: BASIC LIFE SKILLS CURRICULUM

What is Basic Life Skills?

Life skills are defined as “a group of psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that help people make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathize with others, and cope with and manage their lives in a healthy and productive manner. Life skills may be directed toward personal actions or actions toward others, as well as toward actions to change the surrounding environment to make it conducive to health.” according to World Health Organization (WHO). Bearing the WHO definition in mind, the Basic Life Skills curriculum offers youth the emotional, social and intellectual tools needed to achieve success in life – on a personal level, an interpersonal level, and within their community and work places.

Who Developed Basic Life Skills Curriculum?

It was developed by UNICEF in close collaboration with the Ministry of Youth and Sport of Azerbaijan to provide youth with new knowledge and the opportunity to apply novel skills in a safe environment for the successful transitioning to the adulthood.

“The training course has taught me the importance of finding a job I will really enjoy doing and to enjoy every moment of my life.”

- Gulchin Mahmudlu

(one of more than 200 students aged 12-24 years old who participated in the piloting course)



AZƏRBAYCAN RESPUBLİKASININ
GƏNCLƏR VƏ İDMAN NAZİRLİYİ

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Why Is Basic Life Skills Important?

The Basic Life skills provides readily available tools to deal with challenges/demands of daily lives the youth face, from managing their emotions to make an informed decision. It also helps develop children’s personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities, and realize their true potential through learning to know oneself and others, and make effective decisions to live harmonically together in the society. The Education for All (2000) included life skills among the essential learning tool for survival, capacity development and quality life. It also documented that all young people and adults have the “human right to benefit from an education that includes learning to know, to do, to live together.” recognizing the importance of living together as much as acquiring knowledge from an academic environment.

What Is Basic Life Skills For?

- Objective: Young generations develop attitudes and beliefs in a positive manner so that they contribute to Azerbaijani society and achieve success as they transition to adulthood, and the work world.
- Target audience: The life skills lesson package is intended to apply to young generation aged 10 to 24 years old who come to Youth Houses aiming to creating a healthy condition to support and advancement of youth initiatives.
- Expected outcome: Through life skills education, young generations are equipped with foundational skills necessary for transitioning to productive adulthood; manage stress; learn to deal with difficult emotions; practice positivism; improve self-esteem; feel empathy; learn to listen to others carefully; learn to set personal boundary; handle dispute well; find balance between priorities and demands; communicate confidently; set goals; make decisions; solve problems; think critically and creatively; use executive functional skills; and learn to bounce back from adversity.

“I see these young people excited to have the opportunity to learn about topics that are traditionally not covered in formal academic settings.”

Michelle May

(UNICEF International consultant)

“A joint initiative between the Government and the United Nations that aims to revitalize the Youth Houses’ platform through the delivery of an integrated package of services in the heart of the community.”

Aida Ailarova

(Youth and Adolescent Development Specialist at UNICEF Azerbaijan)



Basic Life Skills Curriculum for Youth

The Basic Life Skills curriculum for the youth are based in evidence-based psychosocial methodology including cognitive-behavioral therapy, mindfulness and resilience-building activities. These skills can help youth better understand themselves, get along with others, and gain tools to cope with life's inevitable difficulties.

Self-awareness	Interpersonal Skills	Thinking Skills
1. Stress management	5. Empathy	11. Goal setting
2. Emotional regulation	6. Listening skills	12. Decision making
3. Positive thinking	7. Interpersonal effectiveness	13. Problem solving
4. Self-esteem	8. Handling disputes	14. Critical and creative thinking
	9. Managing relationships	15. Executive function skills
	10. Confident communication	16. Resilience (bouncing back from adversity)

Total 16 topics are covered. Ideally, 2 lessons will be covered in a week in a 8-week session. Each lesson is designed to be delivered for 90 mins for discussion, activities, and group work. However, it is up to Youth House to choose how to deliver the lessons.

- **Self-awareness** — knowing and living with oneself: This theme covers topics that foster the student's relationship and understanding of themselves including their thoughts, feelings and behaviors.
- **Interpersonal Skills** — knowing and living with others: The lessons in this theme explore how to establish healthy, respectful relationships; lessons highlight the use of non-violent communication, assertiveness and dispute resolution.
- **Thinking Skills** — making effective decisions: The skills taught in this theme include concrete ways of thinking and executing tasks so that youth will make effective decisions, set relevant goals, and be informed consumers of information.

Progress of Basic Life Skills Curriculum for Youth

As a result of successful testing through the two pilot Youth Houses – in Baku-Binagadi and Mingachevir, the UNICEF-developed Basic Life Skills programme was expanded to one more Youth House supported by the Ministry of Youth and Sports, as well as three Career Centres supported by the Youth Foundation. In parallel, negotiations are held with the Ministry of Education with regards to possible inclusion of the BLS programme into the formal education curriculum.

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