Comprehensive Life Skills Framework

Rights based and life cycle approach to building skills for empowerment

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Acknowledgements

Introduction

Investing in the world's 1.2 billion adolescents aged 10-19 could break entrenched cycles of poverty and inequity. India is home to more than 253 million adolescents. Caste, gender, poverty and location continue to pose barriers for many young people to realize their full potential.

There is an increasingly stronger focus on developing comprehensive life skills in children and young people in India so that they are empowered and are responsible citizens of society. In addition to academic, vocational, and technical skills, the focus is now on building those skills or competencies that are needed to meet the demands of the increasingly vulnerable situations of our diverse societies.

In India's complex and diverse scenario, life skills have inherent attributes to elicit empowerment and active participation from children and adolescents, helping them recognize their power and potential and take positive action to promote social inclusion, harmony and promote equal opportunities for all.

There is evidence that psychosocial competencies, including resilience, personal agency and self-confidence, can help a person move out of poverty and life skills can enable young people to protect themselves from a multitude of vulnerable social environments and risk-taking behaviours.

Therefore, young people must be provided the opportunity to gain knowledge and develop relevant values, attitudes and skills that will enable them to participate fully in their society and to continue learning. Developing life skills amongst them is critical to addressing the Sustainable Development Goals.

Research indicates a positive correlation between life skills and increased attendance levels, enhanced classroom behaviour and improved academic achievement. Given the positive correlation between life skills and learning outcomes, the role of life skills education within school curriculum and in the community becomes very important.

Endorsing the need for a broader and integrated approach to life skills, a comprehensive framework to fashion policies and programmes that mainstream life skills both in schools and in communities is critical. UNICEF India has consolidated the efforts by various agencies to bring together a comprehensive framework on life skills that can be used to achieve a defined goal for individuals at specific age group across the life cycle. The effort is to make this framework consistent with global and national perspectives on the skills and characteristics the children and youth of today need for the future, and to the national situations, with a specific focus on the marginalized communities. The framework is primarily built on a strong Rights based and Empowerment approach, supporting children and adolescents in India to address vulnerabilities, lead informed lives, take decisions, and be responsible citizens.

The objective of this paper is to emphasize and delineate the need for life skills in India while coming together on common definition of life skills to be referenced across development sectors. The paper further develops the theory of change and builds a conceptual framework for life skills that embed a set of skills-clusters that are most relevant in the Indian context. It further affirms the importance of operationalizing life skill development as part of a continuum approach, as life skills are life long and must be developed early and implemented through all stages of life.

The paper has been informed by a series of workshops and discussions led by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) India in collaboration with partners in the country, especially the National institutes, UN sister agencies, civil society organizations, academia, and independent experts.

The target audiences for this paper are policy makers, teacher educators and other groups (governmental and non-governmental) that work with teachers, frontline workers and other functionaries in education, health, protection and nutrition; and organisations active in these sectors. The focus of the paper is conceptual and theoretical based on which guidelines for implementation will be prepared.

Content

1

Defining
Life Skills

Computer class – Udaipur

Life skills are a set of abilities, attitudes and socio-emotional competencies that enable individuals to learn, make informed decisions and exercise rights to lead a healthy and productive life and subsequently become agents of change. Life skills promote mental well-being and competence in young people[1] as they face the realities of life. These skills support the development of foundational skills such as literacy, numeracy, digital skills[2] and can also be utilized in several areas, such as gender equality in education, environmental education, peace education or education for development, livelihood and income generation, and for positive health promotion among others. Life skills empower young people to take positive action to participate in their communities, engage in continuous learning, protect themselves and promote health and positive social relationships

The term 'life skills' has been defined by various organizations in respect to the context that the term is applicable to their own programmatic focuses and strategies. For example, the World Health Organization (WHO), considers life skills in the specific context of health and defines them as abilities that support adaptive and positive behaviours that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.

On the same lines, however broader and applicable beyond health domain, the World Bank, through the lens of gender norms and human rights, defines life skills as a set of social and behavioural skills also referred to as "soft" or "non-cognitive" skills that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands of everyday life.

UNICEF's Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA) framework provides an all-encompassing definition[3] that states development of life skills as a process to be applied to various learning areas covering four dimensions: the cognitive, the individual, the social and the instrumental. Life skills are regarded as a cross cutting, interconnected and overlapping application of knowledge, values, attitudes and skills which are integral to quality education and are universally applicable and contextual.

> Drawing from the above, life skills are a set of abilities, attitudes and socio-emotional competencies that enable individuals to learn, make informed decisions and exercise rights to lead a healthy and productive life and subsequently become agents of change.

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[1] UNICEF, Adolescent and Youth Engagement Strategic Framework Adolescents: 10-19 years, Youth: 15-24 years and Young People: 10-24 years, which is the term that covers all adolescents and youth.

[2] Also referred to as basic cognitive skills in the 2016 GEM Report in "improving workd outcomes among Young people: what role of skills?" UNICEF HQ/Education Development Trust March 2017

[3] http://www.lsce-mena.org/

Children learn paper cutting during a session at the Child Friendly Space (CFS) – Jammu and Kashmir

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The concept of life skills has acquired different meanings and connotations driven by varied interventions aimed at development of specific skills such as livelihood skills, technical skills, abilities, health, gender equality, leadership and others. The term became popular as an important component of interventions in health, reproductive health and HIV/AIDS and comprehensive sexuality education. Thus, the term is so broad as opposed to restrictive/defined that different organizations undertake multiple/different activities under the name of life skills.

UNICEF's derived definition necessitates further narrowing down this term to focus on specific gamut of skills necessary for overall development and empowerment of an individual. The skills are directed to capacitate and enable individuals to

engage in changing social inequalities to lead more informed, proactive lives in their personal, social and community context and gain control over their lives. That means narrowing down the definition of life skills and conceptualizing universal skills that are most essential for individuals to function, thrive and adapt in their lived realities.

The knowledge, skills and attitudes (KSA) approach could bring about the change envisaged when individuals apply these skills. Establishing baseline understanding of knowledge (what one knows), skills (what one can do) and attitudes (what one believes and values) help practitioners be more purposeful not only when reinforcing life skills but also when applying such competencies to help children and young people navigate unique challenges at pivotal moments across individual's life and in different contexts[4].

Embedded in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) There is a broad consensus on type of skills needed.

FOUNDATIONAL
literacy, numeracy and increase digital skills

TRANSFERABLE
can be applied in different situations such as communication, creativity, problem-solving, empathy, respect for diversity and critical thinking

JOB-SPECIFIC
allows performance in a particular job such as carpentry, coding, accounting or engineering. Can become outdated

Life skills are the skills necessary to acquire all the other three categories of skills. These constitute important constituents of the 21st century skills. (refer section 4-life skills in Indian context).

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[4] Kwauk C & Braga, 2017 Life skills education is more than teaching skills, Brookings institution Washington DC

2

Need for Life Skills in India

Adolocent life skill training programme(SPARSH) ,Pimpalgaon. A local boy admires a picture Alyssa Milano took of him – Maharashtra

Three core issues impacting the Indian landscape are inequity, fragile knowledge society and depleting human capital, and all are synergistic and interdependent.

Inequity

Post-independence, patterns of inequality and exclusion continue to exist in India, largely due to deep rooted social (e.g. caste, tribal, minorities and gender) and class structures that perpetuate and limit opportunities for people, systematically blocking them from availing of the rights, opportunities and resources that are usually available to all members of society. Within these groups, girls are further discriminated due to their sex. The degree to which the inequity exists varies between regions and geographies.

India's total population at 1.2 billion (2011 National Census) with 20.9 percent (253 million – 133.4 million boys and 119.8 million girls) younger than 18 years, makes it a home to the largest number of children in the world, with about half of these belonging to disadvantaged groups such as Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and minorities. Girls start to drop out as they move across the education levels, SC, ST and rural areas reflect the disparity more. While 70 percent of the total number of 3 to 6 years old children are attending pre-school, 20 million children are still not attending preschool are predominantly girls from the poorest families, Muslims and those who live in rural areas.

The gross enrolment ratio (GER) leans towards boys at the primary level, but drops for all children as they move from primary to lower secondary and to

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Girl rescued from child trafficking and is now working in Beti Zindabad Bakery whose mission is to retain the youth in their villages so that the girls are employed

Children from Muslim, SC and ST communities, particularly girls, make up most of the out-of-school children (67 percent) population in India, although they only make up 40 percent of the child population, indicating their disproportionate exclusion from education.

secondary levels. (Educational Statistics at a glance, 2014 & 2016, MHRD, Govt. of India).

Children from Muslim, SC and ST communities, particularly girls, make up most of the out-of-school children (67 percent) population in India, although they only make up 40 percent of the child population, indicating their disproportionate exclusion from education. Girls, rural children and those belonging to lower wealth quintiles are more disadvantaged and likely to account for a much larger proportion of out-of-school children[5]. Gender inequalities interlock with other forms of social inequality, notably caste, ethnicity and religion, with girls from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Muslim minorities, in particular, constituting the largest population of out-of-school and dropout children[6]. Many girls have never enrolled in schools and the transition rates do not acknowledge this number across all grades.

Adolescent girls and boys experience multiple layers of vulnerabilities based on sex, age, caste, socio-economic status and geography. Adolescent girls will face bigger challenges in this transition, as they face multiple deprivations in India. Girls are discriminated against in India at all stages of the life cycle, starting with sex-selective abortions, higher female infant mortality, higher anaemia, lower secondary school completion and an overall lower investment of household resources for daughters than sons. The onset of puberty reduces girls' freedom, mobility and increases their unpaid care work in the household.

Girls and boys are also socialized to aspire for different adulthoods. Boys expect to become self-sufficient and economically productive while girls are expected to become wives and mothers, sometimes even below the age of 18. As families move out of poverty, this leads to one of the lowest female labour force participation rates in the world that has fallen in recent years. Where girls and boys express aspirations for jobs, they generally tend to opt for gender-traditional/stereotyped careerss. Boys aspire to be constables and doctors, girls aspire to be nurses and teachers.

Caste, religion and geography multiply these gender deprivations and in some cases, boys are more likely to drop out of secondary school and be recruited into violent local movements. The three most pressing gender-based deprivations for Indian girls and boys are: (i) Ability to postpone age at marriage (ii) Violence and the fear of violence, especially in preventing girls' ability to access services and (iii) Knowledge, skills and networks to imagine, aspire and prepare for an adulthood that is different from their parents'.

Fragile Knowledge Society

Knowledge is the core of a productive society, however the ability to learn and apply critical thinking skills to solving problems (both defined as "skills") is more important than the accumulation of knowledge. This ability supports the individuals to invent and innovate, leading to social and economic growth.

In India, children and adolescents have low levels of understanding and conceptual clarity around learning, analytical skills and knowledge of human rights, including gender equality. National Achievement Survey (NAS), State Learning Achievement Surveys (SLAS), Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) and Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) are large scale assessments that have consistently pointed to the poor learning levels of children in language and mathematics even after eight years of education. Most of these children live in the states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh and are from SC, ST and minority communities.

Malnutrition and stunting affects 38 percent children under five in India and also impacts mental/cognitive development, so it affects their ability to learn and eventually negatively impact's child's future productivity potential.

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[5] UNICEF-USI (2014) report on out-of-school children in India
[6] Bandyopadhyay and Subrahmanian (2008)

Older adolescents (14-18 years of age) in rural areas are not learning in schools and are not equipped with skills and abilities they will need to be ready for productive lives as adults[7]. The enrolment gap between males and females in the formal education system increases with age. At age 18, 32 percent females are not enrolled as compared to 28 percent males. At age 14, the percentage of youth not enrolled is 5 percent. By age 18, this figure increases to 30 percent. As they grow up, more girls drop out of school in rural areas, 86 percent of youth in the 14-18 age group are still within the formal education system, yet, a substantial proportion of them are also engaged in unpaid work (42 percent), mostly in agriculture or household chores. Most 14 to 18-year-olds can use cell phones but cannot read basic texts. Learning deficits carry forward as 14 to 18-year-olds go from being adolescents to young adults showing inability to apply basic literacy and numeracy skills to everyday tasks.

More rural adolescents are not promoted to further grades because they struggle with reading, math; with girls it is worse off. This makes girls especially vulnerable to dropping out from school. Those who are enrolled in school or college are less likely to work in the same time (61.5 percent), and those who were not enrolled, ended up working instead (60.2 percent).

Thus, young people facing inequities and exclusion are particularly incapacitated from creating, accumulating and using knowledge, resulting in a fragile knowledge society.

More than 12 million young girls and boys between 15 and 29 years of age are expected to enter India's labour force every year for the next two decades. The government has pledged to skill 500 million people by 2022 as a part of the Skills India Mission. This should be put in a context where 90 percent of the workforce is in the informal sector and millions

Mohit Uikey, 8, demonstrates during a practice session of the Tinka Samajik Sanstha martial arts training program. Tinka Samajik Sanstha was started as platform to give self confidence and fight against harassment. The program is determined to equip self defence skills to boys. Anchor Ritesh Tiwari was one of the awardees of first The ChangeLoomers Fellowship initiated by Harda (MP) based Synergy Sansthan, an NGO working for youth based. The award money is supported by UNICEF's mentorship initiative in Madhya Pradesh that aims to strengthen the voices of young adults and builds their leadership skills.

[7] Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2017

Depleting Human Capital

> Thus, young people facing inequities and exclusion are particularly incapacitated from creating, accumulating and using knowledge, resulting in a fragile knowledge society.

of young people are expected to migrate to urban centres. India's Female Labour Force Participation (FLFP) is one of the lowest in the world, ranking 121 out 131 countries with a decline from 42.6 percent in 1993-94 to 27 percent in 2015. According to a World Bank study, between 2004 and 2012, 19.6 million girls and women dropped from labour force, mainly in rural areas. The best available evidence points at acceptability and value of female employment as well as change in the aspiration of young women as critical determinant in the current decline in women's participation in the workforce. Many critical decisions that impact a woman's life are made in her adolescence without her.

A fragile knowledge society has ramifications on the ability of its members in understanding and applying learning to gain opportunities and build a productive society. This is driving inequalities in health, education and life chances and is most pronounced in some states and pockets of India.

The country is experiencing abject poverty and underdevelopment in several geographical concentrations, where young people do not have necessary skills for productive employment and livelihoods and lack key competencies aligned with the changing demands of the dynamic market and lack workforce readiness. This is driving inequalities in health, education and life chances and is most pronounced in some states and pockets of India. These skills have been recognized as the psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that help 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[8].

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[8] Dewan S, Sarkar U, From education to employability: Preparing South Asian Youth for the world of work, UNICEF 2017

3

Theory of Change

Student Mahesh Kushwaha (aged 13, yellow t-shirt) and fellow students show off soaps brought from home to use for hand washing skills before lunch at Tinsyahi School in Guna District, Madhya Pradesh. A UNICEF program to encourage personal hygeine, hand washing and latrine usage is reaping rewards in the form of diminishing cases of serious illness associated with poor hygeine. With the objective of promoting life saving behaviour and skills in young children – Madhya Pradesh

Empowerment is a personal journey through which an adolescent girl or boy develops a clear and evolving understanding of themselves in the world, accompanied by increasing agency and assets. Empowered adolescents recognize their inherent worth, the fundamental equality of men and women, boys and girls. They critically examine their lives and the inequities in their societies. They participate civically and make personal and public choices to act for the improvement of their lives and their world. Kabeer (2001) said, "Empowerment is the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them."

They can critically examine their lives and broader society and take action towards personal and social transformation[9]. This leads to fostering equitable and knowledge based societies and building stronger human capital.

The theory of change rests on the premise that providing equitable and quality learning opportunities,

resources and supportive opportunities will develop life skills, which multiplied with advocacy, enabling environment and system support will lead to learning and empowerment of children and young people.

A higher-order theory of change as articulated in the UNICEF's Global Framework is applicable to the Indian context as well.

The theory of change is that the systematic development of a breadth of skills, at scale, across the life course of the learner requires

Effective pedagogical strategies such as learner-centered approaches which depend largely on the enabling role of teachers and facilitators. It also requires the age appropriate learning materials to support the pedagogies.

Enabling environments where all learners can participate and feel physically, socially and emotionally safe.

A multiple pathways approach with a focus on formal education delivery as on non-formal and informal education channels including the road to and in the workplace, which will ensure equity and inclusion.

> Empowerment is the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them.

[9] Opening Minds, Improving Lives: Education and Women's Empowerment in Honduras, Murphy-Graham (2012)

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Children react during an activity at the Child Friendly Space (CFS). The Child Friendly Spaces initiative began with 20 pilot CFS in the districts of Srinagar and Budgam, covering 1,000 children. Community mobilisers were trained in skill development programme to be able to work with children in such an environment – Jammu and Kashmir

Gulshan Kandagiri, an 8th grader and the Deputy Chief Minister of the Child Cabinet, takes the lead in demonstrating and motivating the community with an easy and correct way to keep healthy, by using the prescribed six step hand washing process – Odisha

A systems approach which addresses the inclusion of skills in national policies and plans, curricula frameworks, coordination and partnership frameworks, budgeting and financing, human resources and capacity development, M&E and certification frameworks.

And that this development of skills will contribute to achieve tangible outcomes in four separate yet inter-related areas:

The achievement of a knowledge society through improved education outcomes. There is an imperative for India within an increasingly competitive and globalized world, to improve the quality of education at all levels, in particular to develop relevant learning outcomes for the transitions from school to work and adult life. This outcome reflects the 'Learning to Learn' pillar suggested in the Delors Report.

The realization of economic development through improved employment and entrepreneurship. With high youth unemployment, a widespread economic and societal issue in India, as well as the requirements of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Schwab, 2016), substantial pressure is put on education systems to better prepare youth with the skills to navigate this complex new environment (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2008). The skills that are useful for labour intensive or even technology intensive industries are no longer sufficient for economic competitiveness and the knowledge economy. This outcome reflects the 'Learning to Do' pillar suggested in the Delors Report.

The attainment of enhanced social cohesion through improved civic engagement. Social cohesion and inter-connectedness need to be supported by individuals, who chose to positively contribute and participate in their community. Within the theory of change, social cohesion through improved active citizenship has significant education implications regarding the preparation of youth to become active citizens. It reflects the 'Learning to Live Together' pillar suggested in the Delors Report.

The empowerment of each individual through life skills so they can develop a clear and evolving understanding of themselves in the world, accompanied by increasing agency and assets. The 'Learning to Be' pillar in the Delors Report.

Strategies

- **Effective pedagogical strategies** as learner-centered approaches

- **Enabling environments** where all learners can participate and feel physically, socially and emotionally safe.

- **A multiple pathways approach** with a focus on equity and inclusion

- **A systems approach**

Inputs

- Teacher training includes learner-centered approaches
- Establish enabling role of teachers and facilitators.
- Age appropriate learning materials to support the pedagogies.
- Life skills integrated in formal education delivery
- Life skills delivered through non-formal and informal education channels
- Programmes leading to and in the workplace
- Inclusion of skills in national policies and plans, curricula frameworks, coordination and partnership frameworks, budgeting and financing, human resources and capacity development
- M&E and certification frameworks

Outputs

Systematic development of a breadth of skills, at scale, across the life course of the learner

Children and young people express, interact and participate across platforms and spaces

Parents and Communities
- Access information
- Know positive skills, support development, value of education, well being of girls and boys
- Know to recognize and prevent risks
- Support children and young people to provide/access life skills programmes and services
- Community-based structures in place and functioning to create protective environment

Service providers
- Government able to promote access and deliver quality life skills programmes
- Local authorities able to address children and young people's issues
- Support children's enrolment and transition at all levels of schooling

Outcome

The achievement of a knowledge society through improved education outcomes

The realization of economic development through improved employment and entrepreneurship

The attainment of enhanced social cohesion through improved civic engagement

The empowerment of each individual through life skills

4

Life Skills in Indian Context

Stories are wonderful vehicles. They can transport you to a different world, one with endless possibilities. Seventeen-year-old Lipika Murah understands the significance of these fantasy tales-not just for entertainment, but also for steering change in children's lives - Assam

There are four dimensions of skills: Empowerment, Citizenship skills, Learning skills and Skills for Employability[10]. There are a cluster of 10 total core skills separated into each of these dimensions and all dimensions are interdependent and overlap one another. For example, negotiation and decision making skills under the employability dimension are also relevant under other dimensions such as empowerment and social skills, as they are essential for self-advocacy in contexts of gender inequality where adolescents need to engage with adults in the role of decision making to advance their goals (e.g. access to services such as education, health and participation).

1. **Empowerment:** Self-Awareness, Communication, Resilience
2. **Citizenship:** Empathy, Participation
3. **Learning:** Critical thinking, Creativity, Problem Solving
4. **Employability:** Negotiation, Decision-making

There are a cluster of 10 total core skills separated into each of these dimensions and all dimensions are interdependent and overlap one another.

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[10] These skills have been agreed upon in the Indian context through a series of workshops held with the representatives from the UN sister agencies, civil society, institutions and independent experts.

Sahayoginis, the women who are the backbone of the Mahila Shikshan Kendra or Women's Education Center, learn yoga during a training session – Bihar

Resilience includes skills of coping with stress and coping with emotions, perseverance, trust and relationship building.

Empathy is built-in as part of interpersonal and participation skills.

Self-awareness and critical thinking are important for girls to successfully navigate education opportunities and develop the skills they need for the future. Self-awareness includes self-esteem, self-care and dignity affirmation; while critical thinking includes knowledge of rights and identification of unequal power relationships, amongst other related skills.

Citizenship skills that involve understanding and practicing citizenship concepts (Democracy, fairness, justice, rights, responsibilities, equal opportunities, equity and equality, identity, cohesion, ethics, legislations, etc.) are the skills of critical thinking, participation skills (deliberating civilly, monitoring the government, building coalitions, managing conflict peacefully and fairly, and petitioning, speaking or testifying before public bodies), decision making, negotiation and skills for communication.

Citizenship skills include specific skills from all the four dimensions: communication, empathy, participation, critical thinking, problem solving, negotiation and decision making.

5

Life Skills Continuum

Early childhood education

All skills can be developed throughout the life course in a progressive manner and across different context. When it comes to embedding these skills in curricula, a progression compatible with national curricular framework results useful. Based on the National Curriculum Framework (NCERT, 2005), it is possible to identify periods where certain skills can be emphasized, thus supporting learning achievement and empowerment throughout the educational process.

As a concept of lifelong learning, while all life skills are important across the life cycle, The diagram[11] identifies the need to place special emphasis on certain life skills at specific age groups. The brain science acknowledges that "certain skills such as participation, communication or negotiation, which get initiated in early childhood are better consolidated in later years. Some skills, especially social and self-empowerment skills, remain highly malleable throughout childhood, early and late adolescence"[12].
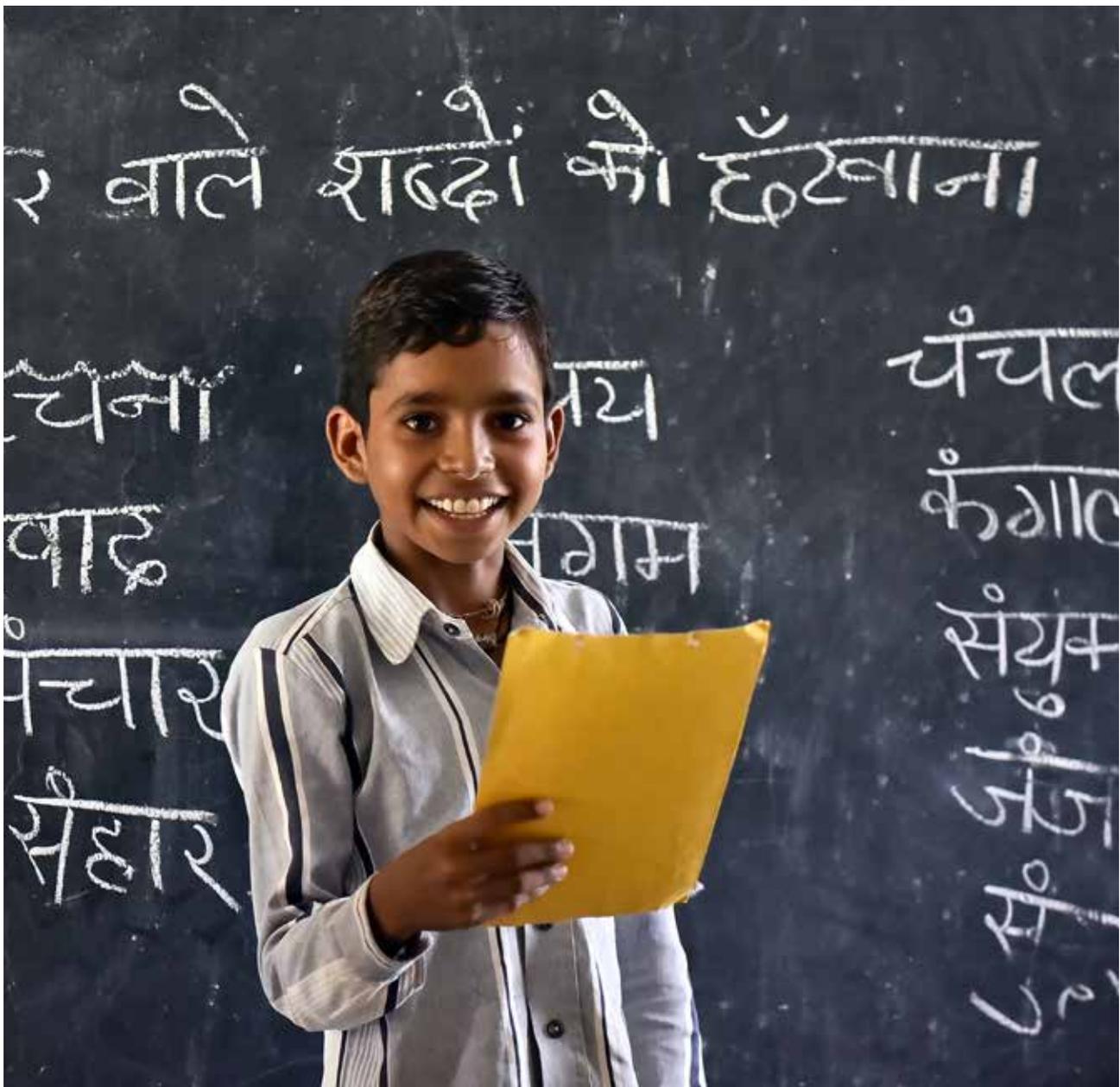
© UNICEF/UN0122047

Children engage to develop reading skill activity at Samudayik Bodhshala Center, Indok Radi, Umren Teshil, District Alwar, Rajasthan

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[11] Developed by UNICEF Education ICO, 2017
[12] Council Early Child Development (2010), from the World Bank, Investing in Young Children, an Early Childhood Development Guide for Policy Dialogue and Project Preparation, 2011

Life skills are a complement and not a substitute to foundational skills like reading and mathematics and the two must be integrated rather than focused in isolation or parallel.

Central to the concept of lifelong learning is the assertion that not all of life-relevant competencies/skills can be provided by initial education, because:

Competencies develop and change throughout the lifespan, with the possibility of acquiring or losing competence as one grows older;
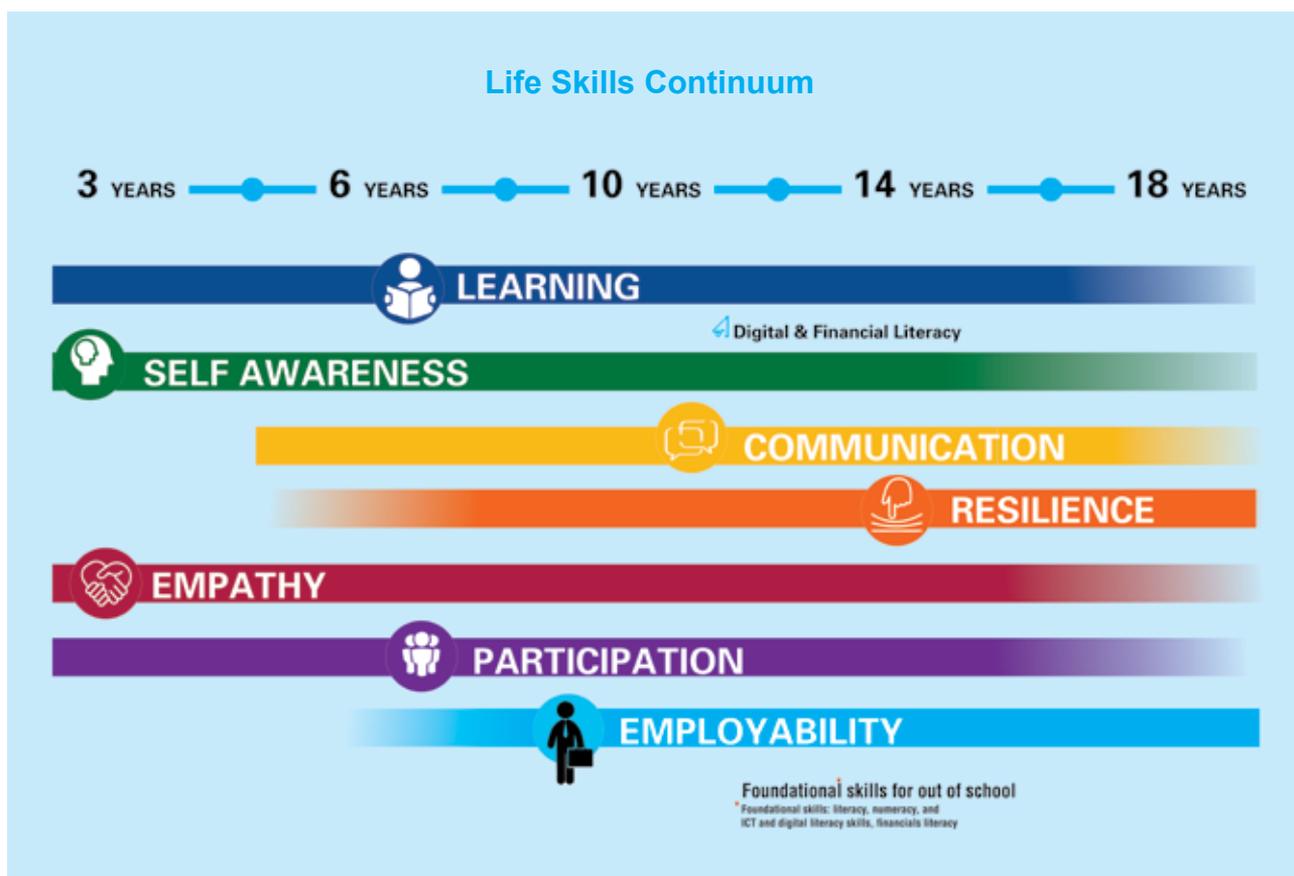
The demands on individuals can be expected to change throughout their adult lives as a result of transformations in technology and in social and economic structures; and

Developmental psychology shows that competence development does not end at early stages or at adolescence but continues through the adult years. In particular, the ability to think and act reflectively, central to the framework, grows with maturity.[13]

Thus, the framework identifies learning, self-awareness and interpersonal skills as the most important skills to be emphasized in the early years of a child, but these are also crucial during adolescence, a stage of identity formation when attitudes toward socialization, gender equality and human rights begin to consolidate. In addition to these, need for communication and participation skills start to gain prominence in 6 to 14 years age group and continue developing through late adolescence and adulthood. Resilience and employability skills build upon the skills developed through childhood and become prominent from 14 to 19 years and onwards.

Life skills are a complement and not a substitute to foundational skills like reading and mathematics and the two must be integrated rather than focused in isolation or parallel.

Life Skills Continuum

3 YEARS — 6 YEARS — 10 YEARS — 14 YEARS — 18 YEARS

LEARNING
Digital & Financial Literacy
SELF AWARENESS
COMMUNICATION
RESILIENCE
EMPATHY
PARTICIPATION
EMPLOYABILITY
Foundational skills for out of school
Foundational skills: literacy, numeracy, and ICT and digital literacy skills, financials literacy

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[13] Key competencies for a successful life and a well-functioning society. Citation. Rychen, D. S., & Salganik, L. H. (Eds.). (2003)

The differentiation between 'life skills' and foundational skills, such as numeracy, literacy and digital skills does not preclude the importance of the latter. At all stages from early childhood to adulthood, both types of skills need to be developed concurrently in an integrated fashion.

The development of one does not happen at the expense of the latter. On the contrary, nurturing life skills arguably enables learners to order and compute information in a more organized fashion while controlling themselves and their reactions during the learning process. Further, it has been shown that life skills programmes allow children to retain information and use it overtime (Lamb et al., 2006). This applies throughout the span of childhood and adolescence and not only during a single stage (e.g. predominantly early childhood).

In adolescence (11 to 19 years), the linkage to employability and to productive citizenship, becomes increasingly important. Hence, those children who miss out on developing foundational skills, need to build these, considering these are the building blocks of life skills and technical skills. Brain science acknowledges that "although foundational cognitive skills become less malleable after age, these, in addition to social, negotiation and resilience skills may be the most effective way to improve adolescents' transition into employability".

Education with life skills as its integral component, will only improve the opportunities for young people and improve their life chances and options, if these are re-envisioned and address the emerging and dynamic needs of the 21st century. This will be particularly relevant in the context of employability, with fast paced developments in technology making traditional skills obsolete and manual operations dispensable.

The need of the hour would therefore be helping children develop attitude of flexibility and resilience to be able to respond to rapid changes and the 4Cs of creativity, communication, collaboration and critical thinking are critical parts of life skills in education. Skill sets beyond employability also remain relevant as the child grows older. The trajectory of development of skills must be aimed at ensuring building knowledge society, addressing inequities such as gender discrimination and building human capital.
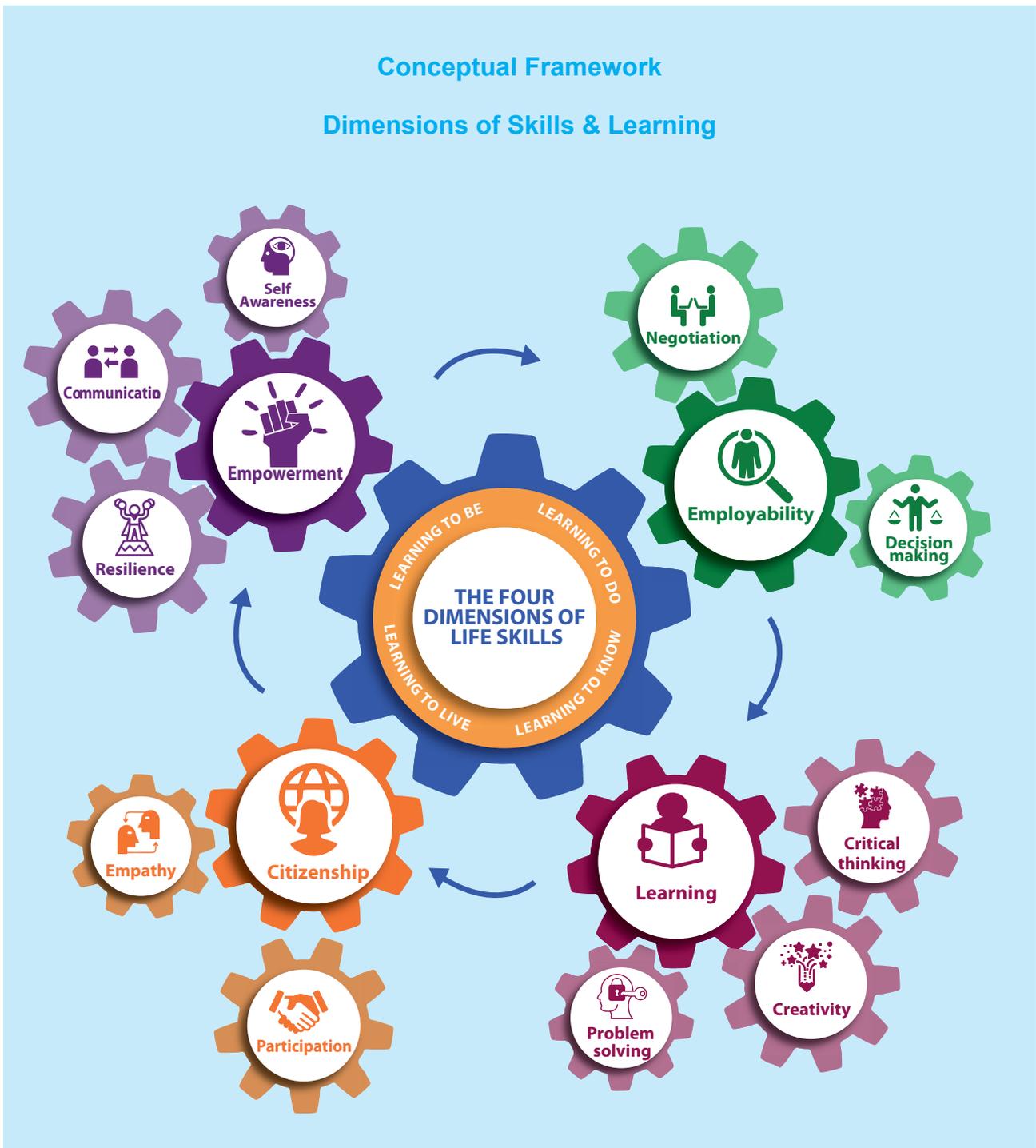
6

Conceptual Framework

20 years old Sumitra, works in her own beauty parlor in Dungri. Sumitra has trained at the local YIC center gaining skills and expertize, which enabled her to venture out in this profession – Gujarat

The diagram illustrates relationship between the four dimensions of Life skills & Learning. It further identifies the various subject areas that support building skills across these dimensions. In India, these subjects are under the domain of different sectors such as Education, Health & Nutrition, Protection, Labour, Skills and others. Equitable learning opportunities include curricular subjects, vocational education, career education, entrepreneurship education, health education, risk reduction education, peace education, civic education, sports, arts & culture and ICT literacy.

1. A holistic approach to education

Quality education fosters empowered individuals who can learn effectively and fulfil their civic responsibilities, while also being successful in workplace.[14]

Conceptual Framework

Dimensions of Skills & Learning

- Self Awareness
- Communication
- Empowerment
- Resilience
- Negotiation
- Employability
- Decision making
- THE FOUR DIMENSIONS OF LIFE SKILLS — LEARNING TO BE, LEARNING TO DO, LEARNING TO KNOW, LEARNING TO LIVE
- Empathy
- Citizenship
- Participation
- Learning
- Critical thinking
- Creativity
- Problem solving

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[14] Adapted from UNICEF MENA Conceptual Framework

Pillars of the Framework (aligned with UNICEF Global Framework 2018)
The framework rests on four pillars.
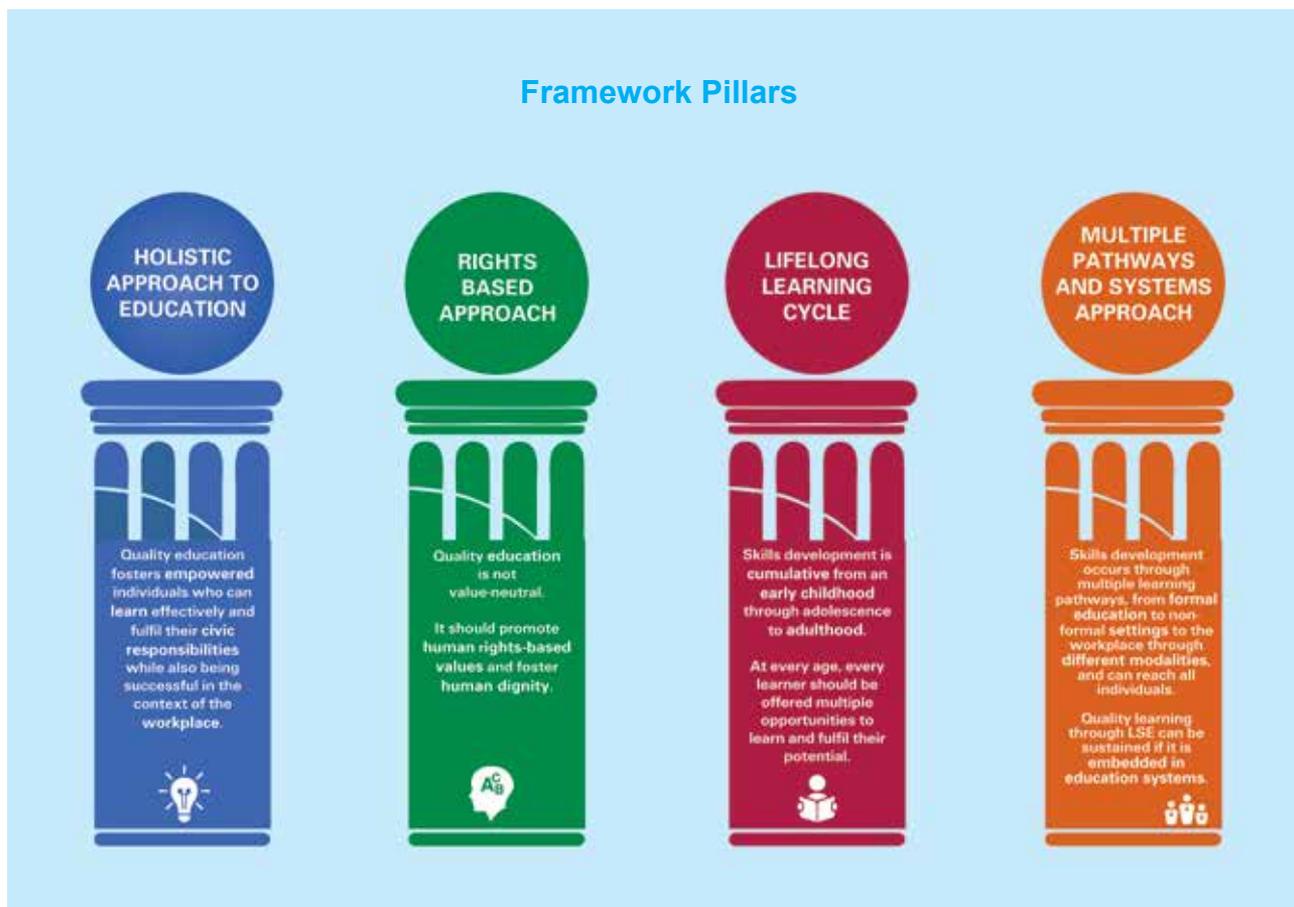

Framework Pillars

HOLISTIC APPROACH TO EDUCATION

Quality education fosters empowered individuals who can learn effectively and fulfil their civic responsibilities while also being successful in the context of the workplace.

RIGHTS BASED APPROACH

Quality education is not value-neutral.

It should promote human rights-based values and foster human dignity.

LIFELONG LEARNING CYCLE

Skills development is cumulative from an early childhood through adolescence to adulthood.

At every age, every learner should be offered multiple opportunities to learn and fulfil their potential.

MULTIPLE PATHWAYS AND SYSTEMS APPROACH

Skills development occurs through multiple learning pathways, from formal education to non-formal settings to the workplace through different modalities, and can reach all individuals.

Quality learning through LSE can be sustained if it is embedded in education systems.

2. A rights-based approach

Quality education is not value-neutral. It should promote human rights-based values and foster human dignity.

3. A lifelong learning cycle

Skills development is cumulative from an early childhood through adolescence to adulthood. At every age, every learner should be offered multiple opportunities to learn and fulfil their potential.

4. A multiple-pathways and systems approach

Skills development occurs through multiple learning pathways, from formal education to non-formal settings to the workplace through different modalities and can reach all individuals. Quality learning through life skills education can be sustained if it is embedded in education systems.

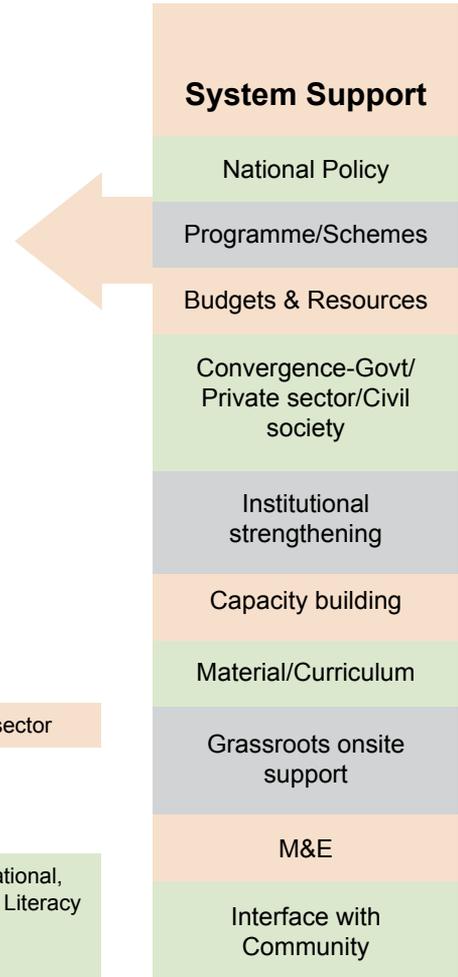The life skills framework, illustrated in diagram on next page, lays down an interrelated and cyclic relationship amongst four dimensions and the key skills built under each of these dimensions. It also clearly identifies various platforms/spaces available in the life of children and young people which can be effectively used to develop them. The approach then rests on the varied content that is used at these platforms to support building the understanding and providing opportunities for practicing the focused skills. Developing life skills is part of a holistic and quality education, as these skills will enable children and young people to become lifelong learners and to address inequalities, abuse (physical, emotional and sexual), neglect and exploitation. In this case, while system support is necessary to provide safety and security to children and young people, it also must necessitate structures to support them when they raise issues and gain confidence to address any form of abuse.[15]

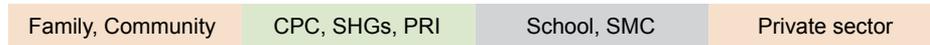The framework also recognizes national government, system involvement, private sector, potential

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[15] Framework generated for the Indian context through a series of workshops held with the representatives from the UN sister agencies, civil society, institutions, and independent experts.
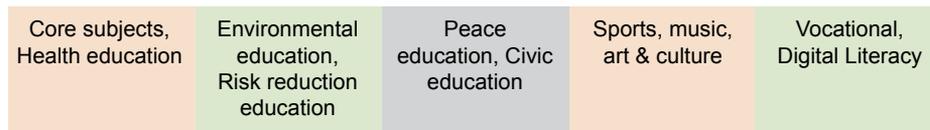
Life Skills Framework – Building Equitable Society

System Support

National Policy

Programme/Schemes

Budgets & Resources

Convergence-Govt/ Private sector/Civil society

Institutional strengthening

Capacity building

Material/Curriculum

Grassroots onsite support

M&E

Interface with Community

PLATFORMS
All skills dimensions can potentially be addressed through different platforms

Family, Community	CPC, SHGs, PRI	School, SMC	Private sector

SUBJECTS
All skills can be taught through different subjects

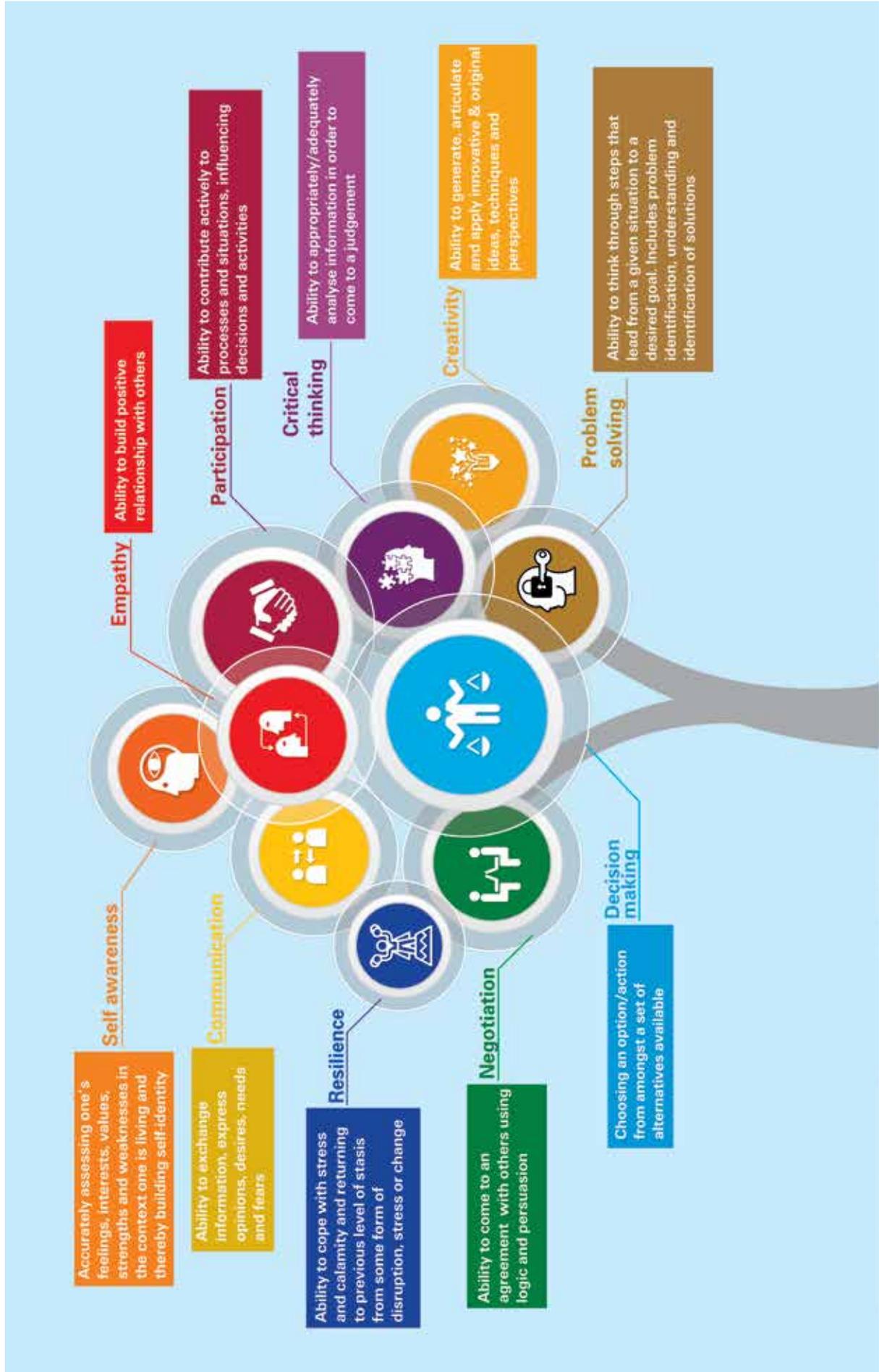| Core subjects, Health education	Environmental education, Risk reduction education	Peace education, Civic education	Sports, music, art & culture	Vocational, Digital Literacy

Young participants at the 'National conclave on catalytic partnerships to unleash the potential of adolescents and young people in India'

employers support in life skills development. This includes policy support, implementation of programmes and schemes as per the policy recommendations, allocating adequate budgets and resources, establishing convergence amongst various ministries and departments focusing on children, strengthening capacities of institutions for developing and delivering the content, trainings, monitoring and review. Further it involves building capacities of government functionaries at all levels (state, districts, blocks and village) in transacting, monitoring and measuring life skills and providing grassroots support.

The entire process must have a strong interface with the community. In addition, the process involves working strongly with the private sector, potential employers, youth groups in the community to bring in synergy to the entire process. In addition, the process necessitates engaging with the private sector/potential employer in this framework. They should not only be a part of the platforms that will help translating these skills into practice but they can also become important stakeholders to impart those skills, thus bringing in technical resource on the forefront and later providing opportunities to put these skills into actual practice.

Description of Life Skills

Empathy
Ability to build positive relationship with others

Participation
Ability to contribute actively to processes and situations, influencing decisions and activities

Critical thinking
Ability to appropriately/adequately analyse information in order to come to a judgement

Creativity
Ability to generate, articulate and apply innovative & original ideas, techniques and perspectives

Problem solving
Ability to think through steps that lead from a given situation to a desired goal. Includes problem identification, understanding and identification of solutions

Self awareness
Accurately assessing one's feelings, interests, values, strengths and weaknesses in the context one is living and thereby building self-identity

Communication
Ability to exchange information, express opinions, desires, needs and fears

Resilience
Ability to cope with stress and calamity and returning to previous level of stasis from some form of disruption, stress or change

Negotiation
Ability to come to an agreement with others using logic and persuasion

Decision making
Choosing an option/action from amongst a set of alternatives available

	Definition	Relevance for marginalized context	Linked skills	Action	Empowerment Perspective Potential Change		
					Individual transformation	Social transformation	Nation Building
Self-Awareness	Accurately assessing one's feelings, interests, values, strengths and weaknesses in the context one is living and thereby building self-identity	• Programmes do not foster this skill • Helps individual to accept oneself, understand challenges that exist due to disparity, cope with emotions, look for solutions to address these challenges. Essential for girls to develop self-worth and become empowered.	Self-esteem, self-worth, coping with emotions, confidence, empathy	Access rights and opportunities, contribute to productivity	Personal behaviour and social attitudes, Emotional control	Equity, gender equality, build knowledge society	• Shape culture, ethics and values, address stereotypes • Contribute to governance and economy
Communication	Ability to exchange information, express opinions, desires, needs and fears	• Helps in functioning of society and for active citizenship • Integral to learning that involves effective speaking and active listening abilities	Self-awareness, Interpersonal, critical thinking, negotiation	Access rights and opportunities Contribute to productivity, Advocating for oneself with parents, community	Effective speaking and active listening, confidence, team work, enhanced efficiency & productivity	Equity, Build knowledge society, Civic participation	• Shape culture, ethics and values, address stereotypes • Contribute to governance and economy
Resilience	Ability to cope with stress and calamity and returning to previous level of stasis from some form of disruption, stress or change	• Helps individual to cope with disappointment or failures and overcome learning difficulties, cope with calamity and handle loss	Coping with stress, empathy, creative thinking	Stress control, adaptability	Self-development in hardships, difficulty and stress, confidence, academic success	Equity, build gender equitable relationships	• Shape culture, ethics and values, address stereotypes • Contribute to governance and economy

	Definition	Relevance for marginalized context	Linked skills	Action	Empowerment Perspective		
						Potential Change	
					Individual transformation	Social transformation	Nation Building
Empathy	Ability to build positive relationships with others	• Helps individuals to live together, respect diversity and have active tolerance • Conflict management & resolution in family, school, communities • Supports learning & academic success	Self-Awareness, communication, empathy, self-esteem, coping with emotions, coping with stress, Team work	Access rights and opportunities, contribute to productivity, team work	Personal behaviour and social attitudes, positive and productive behaviour, engagement of boys and men in eliminating gender discrimination	Equity, build knowledge society	• Shape culture, ethics and values, address stereotypes • Contribute to governance and economy
Participation	Ability to contribute actively to processes and situations, influencing decisions and activities	• Supports democracy • Helps individuals to actively get involved in society, build culture and be responsible for one's actions and decisions	Self-awareness, communication, resilience, empathy, interpersonal, resilience, problem solving	Access rights and opportunities, contribute to productivity, team work	Personal behaviour and social attitudes Navigation of services: health, education, protection and legal services	Equity, build knowledge society	• Shape culture, ethics and values, address stereotypes • Contribute to governance and economy
Critical Thinking	Ability to appropriately/ adequately analyze information in order to come to a judgement	• Helps individuals to analyze information objectively • Contributes to learning-academic success	Self-awareness, communication, decision making, participation, problem solving, negotiation	Access rights and opportunities, contribute to productivity, team work	Social responsibility, decision making recognizing gender inequality	Equity, Build knowledge society, social construction of gender	• Shape culture, ethics and values, address stereotypes • Contribute to governance and economy

	Definition	Relevance for marginalized context	Linked skills	Action	Empowerment Perspective Potential Change		
					Individual transformation	Social transformation	Nation Building
Creativity	Ability to generate, articulate and/ apply inventive and original ideas, techniques and perspectives	• Programmes do not foster this skill • Helps individuals in learning & academic excellence	Self-awareness, critical thinking, problem solving, innovative thinking, coping with stress and emotions, resilience	Contribute to productivity, team work	Conceptual clarity, coping with skills, Employability	Equity, Build knowledge society	• Shape culture, ethics and values, address stereotypes • Contribute to governance and economy
Problem Solving	Ability to think through steps that lead from a given situation to a desired goal. Includes problem identification, understanding, identification of solutions	Programmes are failing to equip children with even basic problem solving skills Problem solving skills along with decision making and critical thinking support in achieving better health and wellbeing Supports learning and academic success	Self-awareness, communica-tion, resilience, interpersonal, participation, critical think-ing, creativity, decision making, negotiation	Collaborative work, responsibility, entrepreneurship	Academic success, enhances curiosity, attentiveness, analytical thinking	Equity, build knowledge society	Shape culture, ethics and values, address stereotypes Contribute to governance and economy
Decision making	Choosing an option/action from amongst a set of alternatives available	Helps to manage risk in daily lives, make constructive and responsible choices about personal and social behaviour Reduces risk of exploitation and abuse Supports learning, academic success	Self-awareness, communica-tion, empathy, resilience, interpersonal, participation, critical thinking, creativity, problem solving, negotia-tion	Access rights and opportunities, goal setting	Personal behaviour and social attitudes, independent	Equity, build knowledge society	Shape culture, ethics and values, address stereotypes Contribute to governance and economy

			Empowerment Perspective					
						Potential Change		
	Definition	Relevance for marginalized context	Linked skills	Action	Individual transformation	Social transformation	Nation Building
Negotiation	Ability to come to an agreement with others using logic and persuasion	Programmes do not foster this skill from early on in life

Helps individual to abstain from risky behaviour, attain positive sexual and reproductive health, access education and opportunities | Self-awareness, communica-tion, resilience, interpersonal, participation, critical thinking, creativity, problem solving, decision making | Leadership, influencing others, career planning, team work | Positive interaction, respecting others, personal empowerment, self-advocacy | Equity, gender equality | Shape culture, ethics and values, address stereotypes

Contribute to governance and economy |

7

Operationalization

Karan Zaveri Village, Valsad District, Gujarat, India. 17th May 2012: Self help group members, perform day to day activities as they assemble at the Vasundhara dairy co-operative in Karan Zaveri village

Life skills are necessary in helping children and young people feel a deep sense of empowerment. The empowered individuals are able to recognize their own identity and worth, that of others, and bring together a group's strengths to contribute to the personal and social transformation. This is especially applicable in the context of achieving social and gender parity. For example, an empowered individual can address issues around girls who have been marginalized in pockets of Indian communities.

The framework provides the foundation in constructing an operational strategy that encompasses practices at various platforms wherein different groups or individuals having different backgrounds (origin, age, ethnicity, caste, class, religion, gender,) are culturally and socially accepted and treated equally. To make this empowerment sustainable, the process requires long lasting solutions to problems and adequate scaffolding periodically to enable children and young people to become agents of social change.

This approach holds the vision of encouraging and promoting empowerment of children and young people in education, economic, social, legal and political spheres giving rise to greater gender equality, equity and social justice.

Access to Life Skills programme

Provide access to life skills building programmes that are delivered in safe and secure environment and platforms.

Have flexible and convenient timings to facilitate the life skills building platforms both in the communities and also in-school or out of school to ensure regular participation of children and young people.

Embed Life Skills programmes into the existing Social Protection Schemes to motivate children and young people to participate and complete the programme.

> This approach holds the vision of encouraging and promoting empowerment of children and young people in education, economic, social, legal and political spheres giving rise to greater gender equality, equity and social justice.

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Adoloscent girls group raise issues of education, child marriage and vocational training skills to village elders at a 'Gramin Baithak", organized to discuss " bal vivah", in Chapriawan, Jamua block of Giridih

The operationalization strategy involves the following steps

Operationalization

In-School & In-Communities
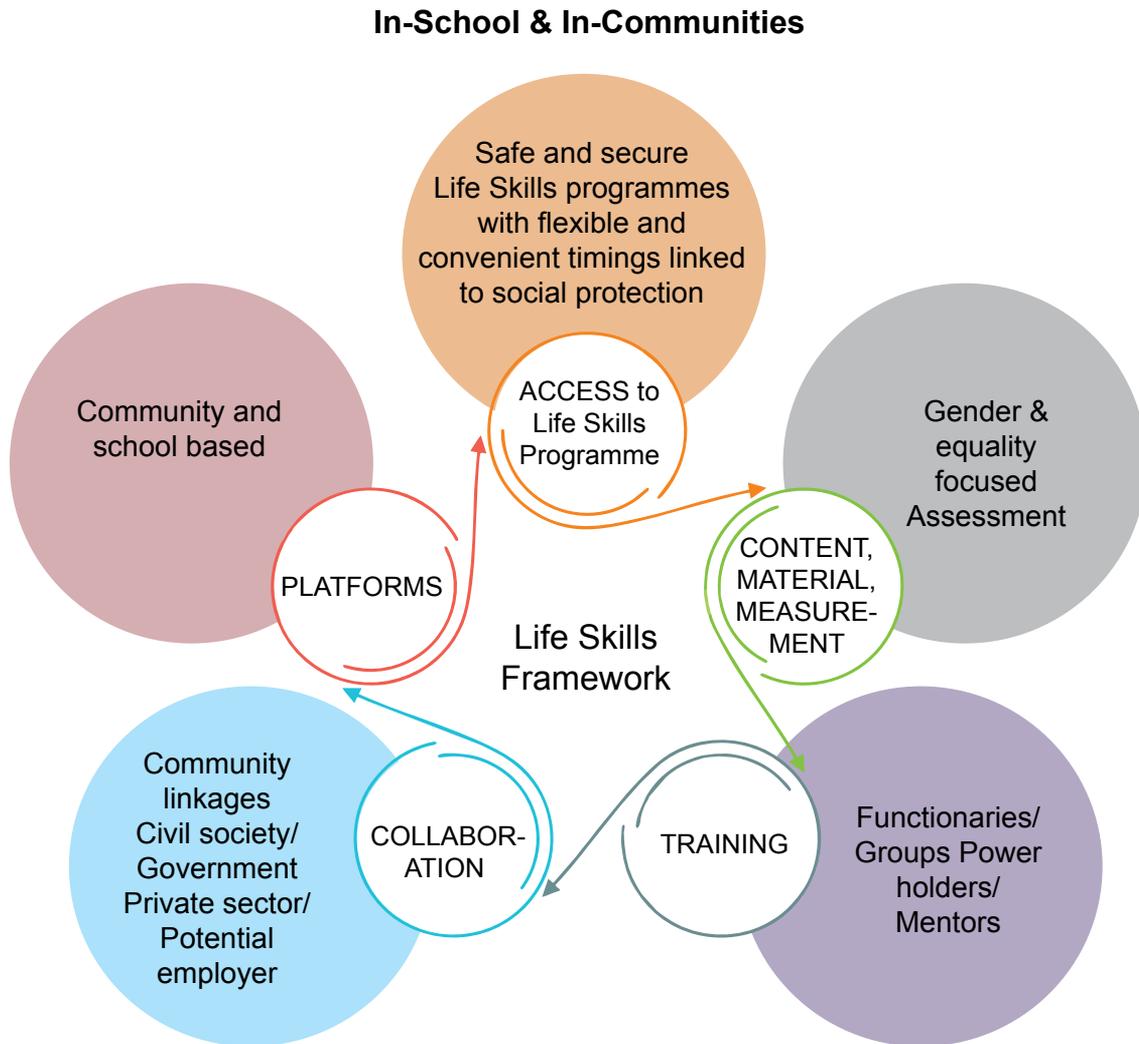
Training and development

Provide regular training and support to responsible functionaries and groups who have a potential to support building skills in children and young people. In school settings, these are head teachers, teachers and school management committees. In the community, these are the Child Protection Committee (CPC), Self Help Groups (SHG) and Local Governance (Panchayati Raj Institutions-PRI). They need to be oriented and trained in different of skills and the ways to support/nurture them in children and young people, within their capacities, roles and jurisdiction. The training programmes must nurture sensitivity, listening skills and participatory approach in these functionaries and groups.

Strengthen mentors' agency, leadership, learning and ensure their participation in decisions affecting their personal and professional lives.

Implement training/development programmes for the power holders in the community, parents, administration, School Management Committee and others.

Content, Material and Measurement

Develop/use gender-focused content/curriculum to break gender stereotypes both for community based and in-school programmes. As a standalone in the community based interventions and integrated within the school curriculum, this curriculum embeds social reality of children and young people, and demands

situating intensive mentor-student interactions that challenge existing power structures and relationships.

Platforms

Embed Life Skills Programme within the existing curricular, co-curricular and vocational activities in schools for synergy and impact and feasibility of using classroom time effectively. Most literature agrees that skills are better learned when embedded in the pedagogies used to teach curricular subjects, which could include not only maths, literacy and science, but also sports, arts, etc.

Establish platforms for Life Skills development both in communities and in-school for children and young people who are either out of school or in-school. The platforms that may be used in school include leadership platforms, sports, morning assembly, cultural activities, drama and debate forums, children governance, children committees and others. Out of school platforms include community based adolescent groups, sports, cultural activities and civic action.

Provide a series of planned activities and experiences to children and young people through these platforms.

Measure the life skills based outcomes to inform and strengthen strategy and understand empowerment concretely. Pre and continuous measurement of skills for every child and young person who goes through the life skill building framework is important.

Collaboration

Establish close Community linkages to influence parents and community on critical gender and social issues in order to create an enabling environment for children and young people.

Nurture systems to be enablers, building trust, value and compassion for all who deliver and participate in the Life Skills Programme.

Collaborate with private sector, civil society and government for synergetic and accelerated efforts.

Engage with private sector/potential employer to establish platforms that help translating Life Skills into practice, impart those skills by volunteering or providing internship opportunities and later linking internship to job opportunities.

Develop a collaborative accountability framework assigning roles and responsibilities of every stakeholder and enabler.

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