

**Skills for Life:
Developing a Sustainable Life Skills Education
Program in Bhavnagar, Gujarat**

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2005-2006

July 2006

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Abstract

This paper will document and analyze the development of a life skills education program in Bhavnagar, Gujarat. The program was conducted in conjunction with Shaishav, an NGO committed to promoting child rights and bringing an end to child labor in Bhavnagar. The framework of the program is based on various life skills that UNICEF and the WHO espouse as vital for all people to possess. The other skills and values incorporated into the program were chosen based on observations of the target communities and the goals and vision for Shaishav's programs. The target age group for this program was 3 to 14 years and distinct life skills modules were designed for three sub-groups: ages 3-5, 6-10, and 11-14. The intended population for these modules consisted of a cross-section of various socio-economic, religious, and caste communities, ranging from non-school-going children living in slum areas to private school students. The paper will discuss the information gathered from observations and how this was used to develop modules. It will also discuss measure taken to ensure sustainability of the program.

Introduction

This paper will chronicle and discuss the development of a life skills education program targeting children between the ages of 3 and 14, in Bhavnagar, Gujarat. The program was created and conducted in conjunction with Shaishav, a child rights organization whose mission is to bring an end to child labor in Bhavnagar and promote child rights for all children. The children Shaishav works with include private and municipal school students and there is a particular focus on children living in slums who are often working and/or not attending school. Life skills education represents a shift in educational focus from information to methodologies. Children are empowered with skills rather than knowledge, that can help them to function and make sound personal choices in areas of education, health, careers, and social interaction. Life skills training has the potential to strengthen various development initiatives such as HIV/AIDS prevention, peace brokering, and improving education by using a skills-based approach to shaping children's behavior patterns.

Life Skills Background

The concept of life skills is often interpreted in different ways. It can mean vocational skills that teach a trade or prepare participants for pursuing a job or vocation and it can also mean teaching participants various external skills that help them navigate through daily life, such as sewing, fixing a bicycle, or washing hands. A third interpretation, and the one I framed my program around, has more to do with internal capacities and behaviors that allow individuals to “build the needed competencies for human development and to adopt positive behaviors that enable them to deal effectively with the challenges of everyday life”.¹ The UNICEF website defines life skills-based education as “a means to empower young people in challenging situations...[and]...an interactive process of teaching and learning which enables learners to acquire knowledge and to develop attitudes and skills which support the adoption of healthy behaviours [sic]”.² Life skills generally fall under three categories:

- “1) social and interpersonal skills (including communication, refusal skills, assertiveness, and empathy)
- 2) cognitive skills (including decision making, critical thinking and self-evaluation)
- 3) emotional coping skills (including stress management and increasing an internal locus of control).”³

The life skills approach is being used increasingly to encourage sound decision-making in children so that they will be able to face challenges and avoid detrimental activities and habits as they grow older. It was a topic of discussion at the World Conference that took place in 1990, which was focusing on the issue of Education for All (EFA). EFA is a set of goals set by national governments, development organizations, and civil society groups to give access to formal or non-formal education to all children.⁴ Life skills was included in the set of goals developed, specifically in the goal to “[i]mprove all aspects of the quality of education and ensure excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.”⁵ As such, life skills education has come to be recognized as a valuable component in educating children.

¹ Leena Mangrulkar, Cheryl Vince Whitman, and Marc Posner, “Life Skills Approach to Child and Adolescent Healthy Human Development,” Pan American Health Organization, p. 1.

² “Life Skills.” UNICEF. www.unicef.org/lifeskills

³ Mangrulkar, p. 5

⁴ “Education for All (EFA).” 2006. The World Bank Group.

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTEDUCATION/0,,contentMDK:20374062~menuPK:540090~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:282386,00.html>

⁵ Ibid.

NGO Background

Shaishav is a child rights organization that is committed to work on behalf of and with children so that children are able to enjoy their basic rights and play an active role in realizing them. They have been working in Bhavnagar, Gujarat since 1994 and have strived to ensure that every child receives equal access to proper education and recreation in order to achieve his/her potential, regardless of gender, class, caste, and religion. They also work to promote child rights in an attempt to bring an end to child labor and any type of child abuse, discrimination, and exploitation. Shaishav runs various child-centered projects such as Community Education Centers in various slum areas around Bhavnagar, which provide non-formal education to local children. They have a Multi-Purpose Mobile School program (MPMS) through which Shaishav teachers visit different municipal schools and take with them a bus equipped with a library, games, a computer, and audiovisual equipment. The aim is to improve education in these schools by exposing teachers and students to different teaching materials and techniques. Shaishav also runs a Circle Point program, which conducts developmental activities with children in communities vulnerable to communal clashes in order to promote communal harmony. Within each of these programs runs an independent, child-run children's organization started in 2002 and facilitated by Shaishav, called Bal Sena ("Children's Collective"). The founding pillars of Bal Sena are equality and unity. Teams of children meet to discuss their problems and find solutions to them and to plan monthly activities. Shaishav tries to nurture the children's values and personal development by providing educational and cultural activities and trainings such as leadership camps. Shaishav's hope is that encouraging equality and cooperation along with other values from an early age will lead to societal change so that society will become more humane and just. Accordingly, Bal Sena was the foundation from which to develop the life skills program.

Project Background

After ten years of work to combat child labor and improve education in Bhavnagar, Shaishav conducted an assessment of their work and accomplishments. They found that children were continuing to opt out of school in order to work in hazardous jobs and even those young adults who succeeded in completing school returned to their original jobs rather than pursuing a different non-hazardous course. Shaishav identified a need to work with children from a young age and cultivate their skills and thought processes so that they would make better choices for themselves as they grow older. Shaishav envisioned a life skills program that would be an additional component of Bal Sena to focus on value education and equip children with the skills to force society to rid itself of ills such as child labor and abuse. There was a dual component of using life skills to shape children in line with Bal Sena's vision and also equip them with an "entrepreneurial" outlook to make different life choices. The target group, therefore, would be children in Bal Sena. Shaishav's goal was to reach as many different children as possible, so the structure of the project would be to implement the life skills modules at the various centers, schools, and camps where Bal Sena runs.

Life skills are widely interpreted and therefore this type of program has the potential to be molded to fit the exact needs of the community. My goals for the project were to create an education program that would empower children with universal skills that would make them more productive and useful members of society as well as give them the confidence and skills to choose a path in life different from what they have grown up knowing. My vision was to equip children with the skills and values that would prepare them for general challenges of life and adulthood such as life planning, money management, and social interaction, encourage long-term thinking and entrepreneurship, and discourage child labor and hazardous work choices. This would not be an education program, but rather a personal development course. It would plant seeds for creating societal change that would eventually result in the reduction of issues such as child labor, caste and gender discrimination, and short-term life focus (i.e. hazardous labor). By teaching children skills that play a role in various occupations, I hoped to encourage them to seek out opportunities of their own choice rather than what society dictates for them.

Ideally the children would gain more of an interest in learning and choose to stay in school, even if that necessitated both working and going school. Later, they would go on to choose non-hazardous occupations for themselves. Overall, children would gain a foundation so that they would be able to recognize more opportunities for their futures.

Progression of the Paper

In examining the development of the life skills program, I will document and analyze the steps taken to plan, implement, and sustain the program. I will discuss the impetus behind the proliferation of life skills in education and development initiatives and explore theories of human learning and development that serve as a basis for life skills education. I will also analyze the role of life skills in the historical and current development of India's education system and discuss the potential of using life skills to combat child labor and hazardous work. I will discuss methodology used to develop the program, including observations of the target community and current education system, logic behind choosing module topics, and logic behind framing the modules. I will then analyze the implementation of certain modules and within this touch upon challenges faced, adjustments made, and plans for the future.

Literature Review

The Effectiveness of Life Skills

Life skills programs have been recognized by various UN agencies as an effective means to empower young people. It is therefore evident that life skills have taken their place as a viable and increasingly popular mechanism for development. UNICEF explains on its website how a life skills curriculum fits into its goal of quality education:

“[it] strengthens educational *processes* by insisting on participatory and gender-sensitive teaching and learning methods. ... Life skills-based education enhances the quality of *content* by addressing issues relevant to the lives of learners, both boys and girls. ... Where implemented with high quality, life-skills based education can result in quality *learners* achieving quality educational *outcomes*. [It] can also contribute to a safe, inclusive child-friendly learning *environment*...”⁶

Author, Richard Nelson-Jones, outlines five reasons that can explain the increasing popularity of life skills: First, life skills training has a *developmental emphasis* which means it focuses on preparing all people to handle daily tasks, rather than being a remedial or rehabilitation course. For example, being a good listener is a skill of which people have varying degrees, but we can generally agree that everyone can stand to gain from a course in listening skills. It also has a *preventative emphasis* in that the skills taught are chosen in anticipation of potential challenges and are therefore meant to equip individuals with the know-how to overcome challenges and make sound decisions.⁷ Life skills courses geared toward HIV/AIDS prevention work in this line by teaching participants about effective decision making so that they may choose the option to abstain from sex or intravenous drug use or choose to use adequate protection in order to prevent themselves from contracting the virus. A third reason for the prevalence of life skills programs is that *problems of living are widespread*. In other words, people worldwide face many of the same issues. Tobacco use is a problem in various forms in mostly every country and/or community, so a life skills curriculum that addresses this problem is likely to be adopted widely. Additionally, *helper accountability* is increasing, so counselors find it more effective to actively involve participants in behavioral development and prevention rather than waiting until a need for remedial counseling arises. Finally, during the 1960s and 1970s, a behavioral and cognitive revolution,

⁶ “Life Skills,” UNICEF.

⁷, Richard Nelson-Jones, *Practical Counseling and Helping Skills*, (Mumbai: Better Yourself Books, 2000), pp. 224-5.

respectively, took place in terms of counseling. Life skills, being both action (behavioral) and thoughts (cognitive) based draws from both these theories whose general acceptance persists today.⁸

A common thread that seems to run through all interpretations of life skills and that can also account for its increasing popularity is that the process centers on experiential learning and a collaborative process. Life skills education is a contrast to the didactic teaching methods that are prevalent in Indian schools and therefore provides an alternative to the often-ineffective education that is currently available. Additionally, this type of curriculum for character development is not present in government schools throughout India.

Underlying Theories for Life Skills Program Development

There are various theories about human development and behavior that can serve as a basis for life skills programs. These theories not only legitimize the life skills training process, but can also provide a guide for developing such a program. They give insight into how people learn and more specifically, how they develop and adapt behaviors. There are three such theories that I considered when designing the program: the Social Learning Theory, Multiple Intelligences, and the Constructivist Psychology Theory.

The Social Learning Theory (SLT) has various tenets about how humans learn, which have different implications for life skills programs. The first of these discusses humans' *symbolizing* and *forethought* capabilities. Human behavior is guided by *symbols*, which can be images or words, and are formed from various external influences and experiences. These symbols are then used to *foresee* potential outcomes of actions so that "one can think through the consequences of a behavior without actually performing the behavior".⁹ The idea that humans rely on predetermined notions to guide their actions and not necessarily just personal experience provides a starting point for a life skills program. Life skills training can help children to create new or different *symbols* that will effect sound behaviors through modeling and conditioning. One of the difficulties in molding behaviors is that it is not always possible to replicate situations exactly. For example, creating a truly stressful situation in which children can learn how to deal effectively with stress is quite difficult. However, SLT implies that by participating in repeated role-plays and discussions about potential situations, children should be able to develop appropriate symbols and thus use foresight to guide their actions. Within this framework lies a guide for how life skills should be taught. Life skills curricula should not just focus on what to do in certain situations but also discuss the consequences of various actions and teach how to evaluate such consequences in order to mimic and thus strengthen children's foresight mechanism. While experiential learning is an important aspect of life skills, this theory asserts that humans also have a *vicarious capability*, which allows them to learn by observing others.¹⁰ This implies that it will be important for life skills instructors to model appropriate behavior for all the skills being taught and in general.

Another principle of the Social Learning Theory deals with humans' *self-regulatory capability*. Humans have *self-regulatory* systems that filter external influences to allow them to dictate their own decisions, thoughts, feelings, and actions.¹¹ In other words, self-regulation "allows the gradual substitution of internal controls for external controls of behavior".¹² An underlying goal of life skills programs is to fight negative external influences by equipping participants with the skills to internally guide themselves away from these influences. The concept of self-regulation supports the idea that this type of process is possible.

⁸ Ibid, 224-5.

⁹ Danice Stone, "Social Cognitive Theory," 1998, University of South Florida, http://hsc.usf.edu/~kmbrown/Social_Cognitive_Theory_Overview.htm.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

A related concept to self-regulation is humans' *self-reflective capability*. This quality allows humans to personally analyze and reflect on their own experiences and ideas and then adjust their thoughts in line with the analysis. *Self-efficacy* is a form of self-reflection, which strongly affects one's self-regulation capabilities. Through self-efficacy "people develop perceptions about their own abilities and characteristics that subsequently guide their behavior by determining what a person tries to achieve and how much effort they will put into their performance".¹³ This would necessitate that life skills modules include confidence-building measures that will complement the skill being taught. If the participants do not feel up to the task of completing the processes to shape their behaviors, trying to teach them may be futile. This also calls for life skills classrooms to provide an encouraging environment for participants, where they will feel comfortable trying new things and being open to change.

Similar to SLT, the Constructivist Theory describes a process by which humans learn that upholds the methodology behind life skills behavior modification. The theory states that learning is an ongoing process through which the learner collects and processes information based on past and current experiences then constructs hypotheses and makes a decision based on cognitive structure, or mental models.¹⁴ This implies that since the information humans work with is fluid, teaching should develop children's cognitive structures rather than simply conveying information. Life skills programs aim to do just this. The skills being imparted can be recast as cognitive structures that will aid children in taking sound decisions and actions. When applied, constructivism warrants certain teaching methodologies, which can be useful in shaping a life skills program. Children should be given the space to develop their cognitive structures themselves, rather than being taught them outright. In other words, experiential learning is ideal for children to internalize the lessons.¹⁵ As such, life skills modules should be designed to encourage children to think and experience for themselves and form their own conclusions.

Another theory, Multiple Intelligences, contends that human thinking capacity extends beyond the generally accepted verbal and mathematical intelligence. Humans "are born with the eight intelligences, but they are developed to a different degree in each person, and that in developing skills or solving problems, individuals use their intelligences in different ways".¹⁶ Dr. Howard Gardner developed this theory in 1983 and outlined the following eight human intelligences: Linguistic intelligence ("word smart"), Logical-mathematical intelligence ("number/reasoning smart"), Spatial intelligence ("picture smart"), Bodily-Kinesthetic intelligence ("body smart"), Musical intelligence ("music smart"), Interpersonal intelligence ("people smart"), Intrapersonal intelligence ("self smart"), Naturalist intelligence ("nature smart").¹⁷ This theory serves as a justification for the existence of life skills first by affirming that inter and intrapersonal skills are a form of intelligence that enables humans to address problems and obstacles, and second by advising that all eight of these intelligences should be nurtured in children. Life skills programs directly address interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence by developing communication, leadership, and teamwork skills and by teaching ways of dealing with stress and emotions. Multiple Intelligences also speaks to how a life skills curriculum should be implemented by asserting the importance and legitimacy of all eight intelligences. As such, life skills instructors should employ a variety of teaching techniques that appeal to these different intelligences.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ J. Bruner, "Constructivist Theory," <http://tip.psychology.org/bruner.html>

¹⁵ "Constructivist Theory," Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constructivist_theory

¹⁶ Mangrulkar, p. 17.

¹⁷ Armstrong, Thomas. "Multiple Intelligences." 1998. http://www.thomasarmstrong.com/multiple_intelligences.htm.

Life Skills and Education in India

Before India's independence, it was generally agreed that education was not "suited and rooted in [India's] soil".¹⁸ Indians left school "educated" but were disconnected with their own culture and roots because they had been through an English curriculum.¹⁹ Some of this disconnect likely continues in the education system today. In higher education, "value education and character building took a back seat, if at all".²⁰ In 1952, Dr. A.L. Mudaliar's Secondary Education Commission found that this level of education was "bookish" and "mechanical" and failed to develop qualities such as discipline, leadership, and a collective spirit.²¹ Indian students had been imparted knowledge and practices that they could not necessarily relate to. Therefore this kind of education was unlikely to be able to effect character change or skill development.

In the 1960s and 70s there was a subject in schools called "Moral Science", which relied on religious texts from various faiths to teach children values. Slowly these classes fell under suspicion of being a tool to propagate one certain religion or another, so they no longer exist today.²² Recent efforts have been made to promote the value of unity in schools by having morning assemblies and singing the national anthem to bring students together and give them a common purpose in their love for their country. The onus of value education outside of the home lies mainly on teachers, however mass education tends to inhibit individual attention. This amounts to "lecturing or mass instruction minus character moulding [sic]".²³ Values and skills have to be nurtured in a manner that is appropriate for each child and so cannot be taught in a homogeneous lecture format. A life skills component to education today can serve to pick up where the Moral Science curriculum left off.

Since the 1970s, India has been making efforts to increase awareness and access to pre-primary education. It is increasingly becoming viewed as important in the spheres of "mental, physical, emotional, social and language development of [children]".²⁴ The concept of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) was propagated starting in the late 1980s and it emphasizes holistic child development, both physical and intellectual. It also aims to focus in particular on underprivileged groups and first generation learners. However,

"administration of primary education at the local level has suffered due to lack of money and suitable teachers, lack of a curriculum which is also suited to local needs and aspirations, and also due to social attitudes preventing girls from going to school, not to speak of the low value attached by many communities to education, as being irrelevant to their needs."²⁵

A life skills program aimed at children between the ages of 3 and 5 can attempt to supplement the aims of pre-primary education, if not fill the void in areas where children cannot receive formal education for whatever reason. Since life skills programs are specifically suited to identified needs of communities and are designed keeping local customs and mentalities in mind, they may be more acceptable and seemingly useful to parents who are generally averse to formal education. From pre-primary education onwards, the problem of addressing those communities who fight for daily survival and do not have the "time, money and energy to spare for formal education" pervades.²⁶

The ideal life skills program would draw from some of the logic behind Non-Formal Education (NFE) centers, which were introduced in India during the 1970s. The education was recommended to be child-centered and designed around a relevant curriculum that relates to local needs.²⁷ There was also a

¹⁸ Padma Ramachandran and Vasantha Ramkumar, *Education in India*, (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 2005), p. 134.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 372.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 376.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

focus on community involvement. Life skills curricula should be different for different communities. Since they are action-oriented and preventative, one would necessarily have to fully understand community needs, problems, and influences in order to design a useful and effective program. Adaptability and flexibility were also important at these centers and would be equally so in life skills programs. Since there is no set in stone curriculum or ‘facts’ that need to be taught and since a lot of the factors affecting the effectiveness of life skills modules will be idiosyncratic, it is important to be able to adapt. Like with pre-primary education, life skills curricula are relevant to proceeding age groups. Adolescence is a pivotal time for children and many behaviors and attitudes that will likely stay with them during most of their lives are formed during this period.

In 2000, The National Council for Educational Research and Training published a document called the National Curriculum Framework that outlined four aspects of education in India. The first of these, “context and concerns” included a clause about “linking education with life skills and the world of work [and] value education”.²⁸ While this might be part of the proposed curriculum for Indian schools, it may not actually be taking place in reality so it is important for a separate or joint life skills programs to meet this need. It is encouraging for life skills programs that these influencing entities in education decision making recognize the important of equipping children with skills and knowledge beyond pure academics.

Life Skills as a Tool to Prevent Child Labor and/or Hazardous labor

Child labor continues to be a problem in Bhavnagar and surrounding areas. In a survey conducted by Shaishav in 1994, there were found to be 12,187 children working in 106 different occupations.²⁹ Besides providing supplementary income, child labor exists because of problems in schooling. In many parents’ minds, education does not correlate to a job or guarantee any kind of employment, so they might as well get into a line of work that will guarantee future employment, albeit menial, unskilled, or low-paying. Parents are unsatisfied with the quality of education generally offered in municipal schools and therefore opt for sending their children to work instead.³⁰ Parents exert a great deal of control over their children and therefore their views regarding school education and its benefits significantly affect children’s attendance in schools.³¹ Life skills education is something that is tailored to a community’s needs and so parents will more easily be able to recognize its value. They will be able to relate to the skills being taught because they use them in daily life. While it may be a common assumption to make that poor families do not recognize the importance of education, studies show that in fact they do and can also discern quality education.³² As such, a quality life skills program may at least tempt or convince parents to enroll their children in some informal education, which could potentially encourage them to eventually seek formal education and keep their children out of work.

An issue related to the problem of child labor is that children and young adults fall into hazardous lines of work such as rope making, diamond polishing, and rag picking. There are many reasons behind this, the main likely being that they were born into the profession, as there are often family enterprises to which every member contributes. Another important factor is financial incentives. Employees will often get a premium for the hazards they face, though probably not even proportional with that (if there even is such a measure). Even the salary for a so-called “white collar job” in an office cannot compete with the income from diamond polishing. A third reason is societal pressures. There is a certain hierarchy for occupations that societies follow. In Bhavnagar certain communities consider diamond-polishing work to be an esteemed position, while owning a stall is considered beneath them.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 195.

²⁹ Survey conducted by Shaishav in Bhavnagar in 1994.

³⁰ Harry Anthony Patrinos and Faraaz Siddiqi, “Child Labor: Issues, Causes and Interventions,” Human Capital Development and Operations Policy Working Paper, The World Bank Group, p. 6.

³¹ Ibid, p. 7.

³² Ibid, p. 7.

People are not concerned about serious health risks such as carcinogens and early blindness, and would rather stay within the norms of society than consider non-hazardous alternatives.

People generally do not have a long-term vision for their lives. They seem to make decisions based on current needs and circumstances rather than giving weight to future ramifications. This strategy is understandable for families living in poverty, where there are a number of salient issues to manage on a short-term, or daily basis, but this is not to say that these families and individuals cannot afford to think about their futures. It could be that either the concept of long-term thinking is foreign and it does not occur to them to consider the future, or that they have not developed the necessary skills to facilitate this kind of thinking. Life skills can be useful in this arena. Decision-making, for example, involves considering options, possible outcomes, and a cost-benefit analysis; learning this framework will encourage participants to think beyond their current situation and aim for decisions that will be beneficial for them overall, which can include the long-run. Also building children's confidence will empower them to aspire to achieve more than what they are generally boxed into and to go against societal norms. Critical thinking skills will allow children to analyze a situation from different angles and hopefully recognize that there are multiple facets to any given situation. For example, rather than viewing the decision for which occupation to take as purely a financial question, they will learn to evaluate aspects of safety, physical effects, future growth potential, etc. In addition to this skill, the value of self-worth will encourage them to see issues such as safety and future health as important and worth considering.

Methodology

Topic Selection

The initial starting point was a list published by the World Health Organization (WHO) outlining ten skills it recommends that all children possess. These skills are: 1. Coping with Emotions, 2. Coping with Stress, 3. Creativity, 4. Critical Thinking, 5. Decision Making, 6. Effective Communication, 7. Empathy, 8. Interpersonal Skills, 9. Problem Solving, and 10. Self Awareness.³³ Upon further research, I realized that this list was specifically designed for health-related life skills. A majority of life skills curricula currently underway falls under the category of "skills-based health education", which focuses on modifying behaviors and actions to "promote health and safety and prevent disease."³⁴ I researched further and found a list of life skills published by UNICEF, which encompassed "psychosocial and interpersonal skills that are generally considered important" and which can be applied in different situations to affect different issues and environments that children face.³⁵ For example, the skill of decision-making can be used in an HIV/AIDS prevention program as well as in a program to counsel non-school-going children. The UNICEF list grouped skills into three general categories: Communication and Interpersonal Skills, Decision Making and Critical Thinking Skills, and Coping and Self-Management Skills.³⁶ The UN and WHO life skills lists provided the core group of topics the program would cover, however the other topics chosen were based on observations of the communities and schools and the children's behaviors within these.

Observations of Communities

Sardarnagar is one of the areas where Shaishav runs the Circle Point program. It is located outside of the center of Bhavnagar and is not considered a slum area, per se. The reason the program was started there was that there is a mix of Sindhi and Hindu communities. It is generally residential

³³ "Life Skills," World Health Organization. 1993. www.who.org.

³⁴ "Life Skills," UNICEF, www.unicef.org/lifeskills.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

and there are no big industries. One of the more prominent things I noticed in this group was that children were generally reluctant to be the first to participate in group activities. While this issue is common with children across the board, it seemed particularly strong in this group. It potentially indicated a lack of confidence or alternatively a lack of experience with speaking or performing in front of groups.

Mafatnagar is an area within Bhavnagar's largest slum, Kumbharwada. Kumbharwada is home to many industries such as rope-making, diamond polishing, plastic weaving, and plastic sorting. Mafatnagar has a high concentration of family rope-making industries. It is a well-established community, with concrete houses, but the community has illegally encroached on the land. The children here were eager to learn and participate in the Community Education Center activities, however the girls were often called away from the center by their parents in order to help with housework. This pointed both to gender discrimination against girls in education and to many parents' lack of value for the education being offered.

Devinagar is another area in Kumbharwada and seems to be the least developed area in the slum. It is located along the railroad tracks and there is no sanitation system available. Water has to be brought from a nearby well. There is a small water body that has become a dumping ground for waste and is likely a serious health hazard. The dropout rate in this area is quite high and many children either work or remain idle during the day. Families live in makeshift homes built out of scrap metal and plastic sheets. There is a core group of committed community members that want their children to be educated, but their definition of education does not go much beyond reading and writing.

Many of the children in Devinagar roamed freely around their area, which was littered with garbage, refuse, and human and animal waste. They played with whatever they found lying around, which included pieces of plastic, balloons, stones, and scrap metal. Generally, the children did not have good hygiene as their bodies and clothes are often dirty. They seemed to suffer from malnutrition as their hair was very light and skin was patchy. Some children ate tobacco. Young girls took on a lot of responsibilities in their homes, including cooking food, looking after younger children, washing clothes, and fetching water.

Based on my experiences in Sardarnagar, I recognized the importance of confidence-building and communication modules for the children. I took into consideration the observations in Mafatnagar and Devinagar of time pressures on the children, especially girls. With time management skills, these children might be able to convince their parents to attend schools and centers while also fulfilling their responsibilities in the home. The life skills lessons would provide an opportunity to teach children about gender equality from an early age so that they would hopefully discontinue some of the discriminatory practices prevalent in their areas. It was clear that the usefulness of the lessons would have to be quite apparent, so that parents would allow their children to participate. Hygiene and general health was an issue of importance in certain areas, especially Devinagar, so these topics were incorporated into the self-awareness module.

Observations of Municipal Schools

I was able to visit a collection of municipal schools through Shaishav's MPMS program. Through this program, Shaishav's instructors go into municipal school classrooms with different teaching materials and techniques and work with the teachers and students to improve the education being offered there. The observations I made were the following:

Physical Environment: The most salient characteristic that struck me in each school was the school environment. Children were crowded into small classrooms that often had nothing in the room or on the walls other than a blackboard. They did not have desks or benches on which they could sit comfortably or arrange their books so as to be able to concentrate on learning. There were up to 80 students for one teacher. Classrooms had open windows and doors so that noise from the entire school echoed throughout them. Additionally, other students or people outside the school would often come to

the windows and distract the class. When there was an overflow of children, classes would be conducted in the hallways or stairwells. There were no teaching materials in the room for the children to use nor were there posters on the walls. Some classrooms had quotes or pictures painted on the walls, but nothing that was directly related to the topics children were learning. There was little to stimulate the children or aid in their learning process.

Teaching: The teaching methods generally amounted to one-way didactic process, where the teachers and students did not really interact. Teachers read from textbooks and went at one pace regardless of whether or not the whole class was following. Generally the teachers tried to be strict with the children, but did not always have a great amount of control over the students. Many teachers seemed unengaged and would do paperwork or leave the room in what seemed to be an attempt to pass the time until the school session would be over. On many occasions, the teachers would leave the classroom once Shaishav's teachers arrived instead of remaining to collaborate and learn new teaching techniques. In most schools there would be an older student who was in charge of keeping the students in order for the teachers. Many teachers resorted to threatening, shouting at, and hitting the children on their backs in order to discipline them. I noticed no teaching aids other than the textbook being taught from.

Concept Clarity: Given that the teaching method was generally talking at the children without encouraging questions, the children's understanding seemed quite low. Teachers repeatedly told children not to take notes and only to listen. When teachers would read a passage from a book and ask the students about what was just read, few, if any, would respond. Similarly, once the majority of the class seemed to understand a concept, the teacher might ask about it in a new or rephrased way, and again student were unable to respond. I visited a 6th standard class in which I was informed that the majority of students could not read. Yet, they were working on a passage from a novel that I was not able to follow, given my elementary Gujarati skills. The level was too advanced for this class, and the lesson continued with few students comprehending the material.

Children's Behavior: Children were generally disengaged. There was a handful of students who took on the responsibility of responding to the teacher's questions and so the other children were free to chat with their friends. Many children looked bored and many would talk or play with classmates, write or draw in their notebooks, or run around the classroom. They did not ask questions or indicate whether they understood what was being taught. Children took many bathroom breaks and some would not return after recess.

Overall Effects: The way the students were being taught was not effective. They did not have a nurturing environment where they could focus on learning. They were being taught to simply memorize and regurgitate facts rather than fully process and understand concepts. The children were not learning how to think for themselves or how to apply concepts to different situations. Creativity was being stifled by the non-interactive lecture format and lack of stimulating teaching materials. The forms of discipline prevented teachers from gaining the trust of the children or promoting a sense of respect for children or adults. Children learned to communicate both verbally and physically in an aggressive manner. Besides not properly learning the academic subjects, the thinking and learning techniques that are imbibed through schooling and that are important in non-academic life, were not being learned. So these and other life skills lessons were necessary for the development of the children. Modules on to respect, non-aggressive communication, critical thinking, and problem solving were therefore included in the life skills curriculum.

Observations through General Interactions with Children

Through other interactions with children, I took note of the following practices, behaviors, and beliefs, which helped shape life skills modules:

- Cheating was not only prevalent, but it was considered the norm and even acceptable by many students. Sometimes those who would not cheat themselves were comfortable with allowing

others to copy from them. It was not uncommon to find identical homework even when the questions were open-ended.

- Children fixated on exact directions for tasks rather than trying to understand the underlying concept or basic point. When the task assigned was to fill 5 squares with different patterns in the shortest amount of time, the children preoccupied themselves with whether they had to use pen or pencil and whether open circles were considered dots or not, rather than focusing on the task at hand.
- Giving example answers to questions or assignments proved to be risky, because once someone suggested an idea, the children would automatically focus on it. They either became unable to see beyond that one example, or they did not want to have to think beyond it. When a group of girls working on addressing an issue that girls face in India was asked which issue they wanted to focus on and were given example topics such as education or health, each girl gave one of the two examples as her preferred issue. Children were reluctant to think for themselves and did not seem to value originality.
- There was reluctance, especially in girls, to volunteer ideas or voice opinions. I noticed this trend in adults too, so it seemed this quality had been bred since childhood. There was usually a set of talkative children who were quick to volunteer answer, and the rest of the children were content to let them handle class participation alone.
- There was a lack of desire to achieve. Children did not seem to take their exams seriously and when results arrived, children seemed to accept their marks as matter of fact. They did not seem to fully grasp their role in achieving high marks.
- Judging by some of the children's notebooks that I saw, it seemed that study habits were not taught to the children. Organization skills were lacking and note taking was haphazard such that if I asked children to refer back to their notes to find an answer to a question, they were either unable to find the information or their notes were be incomplete.

Logic Behind Topics

It was important to consider the pertinence of topics, rather than simply drawing from previously practiced life skills programs. For example, the vision for this program was character development and preparation for stable and healthy futures, so the content would have to be geared directly toward this. The following section lists the topics chosen for the life skills program and discusses the justification for their inclusion.

Confidence: Belief in one's abilities allows a person to aspire and achieve. In the context of my project, for children to make life choices that may go against societal norms, they would have to be confident enough to stand up to pressure and believe in their own decisions. The confidence module was also developed in response to observations of the children in school, centers, and camps. Many children were reluctant to participate, speak up, or voice their opinions. By building their confidence skills, I hoped to foster more vocal participation. This was also in line with Shaishav's goal for developing Bal Sena. Bal Sena is based on the concept of children's right to participation and in order for the children to be able to take up this right and address their problems themselves, they would need to have confidence in their abilities and skills.

Conflict resolution: Different levels of conflict arise on a daily basis so it is important for children to learn how to address them. They, girls in particular, face many pressures from family and society, and this skill would be useful in finding a balance when these pressures clash. Additionally, violence is a common occurrence in slum areas, so developing ways to resolve issues without resorting to violence is beneficial.

Coping with Emotions: I found emotions to be a topic that was seldom brought up in schools and even centers. The concept of identifying and understanding one's feelings seemed to be a topic that may not even be addressed at home. Without having a basic idea of what emotions mean beyond simply

saying I am happy, sad, or frustrated, children will likely bottle emotions and could potentially act out in negative ways. As such, teaching children how to identify emotions, examine the causes, and address them would promote emotional well-being.

Coping with Stress (Time Management): School-going children in India have various stresses and time commitments. Besides going to school, they attend tuition, maybe go to work, and have various responsibilities in the house, particularly girls. They also face strong competition in school and if they have a desire to get high marks, they have to devote a lot of time to study. Children have to find a way to juggle different activities and pressures so it is important for them to learn stress and time management skills. These skills will foster productivity and steer children away from becoming overwhelmed by their responsibilities. As they grow older, time management will be important in study and work and balancing a home life. This topic recurred in my work with Bal Sena children because they often had trouble finding time to attend to home and school and also participate in Bal Sena activities.

Creativity and Resourcefulness: Creativity allows children to utilize and express their individuality. It provides an outlet for energy that may not be applicable elsewhere. Since schools do not encourage originality, children seemed to rarely tap into their creative sides. Even while doing arts and crafts, children tended to follow the model rather than creating something of their own. This lack of creativity transcended artistic creativity and also showed itself in children's problem solving and critical thinking capabilities. They were so used to memorizing single answers to questions that they never considered how to find answers and solutions to questions and problems. Resourcefulness is a related topic that I felt would be useful to children. By learning how to be resourceful or think creatively about obstacles, children would become better problem solvers and more efficient workers.

Critical Thinking: Critical thinking skills allow one to fully analyze and assess problems or situations. They are tools to put pieces of a puzzle together and understand the different parts. Based on the common occurrence of children being unable to answer the same question posed in different ways, critical thinking skills would be beneficial to them. They had not been taught how to analyze and understand different parts of issues and situations. The education system taught them to accept whatever was dictated to them. Given the method of examination in schools, which often pulled exactly from textbooks and in which teachers sometimes even give questions ahead of time, children do not have to understand the inner workings of any given topic in order to receive good marks. However, in life, when a situation confronts one, the strategy of memorization or regurgitation will not be useful. Critical thinking skills will equip children with the ability to think through situations carefully and will aid in their decision making and problem solving skills.

Decision-making: With this skill, children would learn how to assess all their options before making a decision and also start recognizing that there are many options out there. They would learn that they should have sound reasons behind the decisions they make. This way they could hopefully make good choices for their futures and avoid child labor and hazardous occupations.

Futures and Long-term Thinking: I found that children were rarely asked what their dreams were or what they hope to be when they grow up and often felt that they did not have the option to have these dreams; they would go into whatever was decided for them by family or society. This kind of thinking leads children to put off developing their potential and just accept whatever fate dictates so this module was aimed at preventing this. Thinking about the future and developing aspirations would give children something to work toward

Effective Communication: Communication is a skill every person needs in life to build relationships and interact with other people. I found a lot of the children were uncomfortable talking in front of others and when they did many of them spoke in a similar manner that they must have been taught in schools: arms folded, looking distantly, and talking quickly as if reading off a list. I wanted them to learn how to speak effectively and to recognize that their body language also conveys messages to other people. If they wanted to enter a professional job, they would have to learn these skills.

Empathy: Empathy is one of the founding pillars of Bal Sena, as Shaishav wants to mold children who care about their neighbors and want to work for the betterment of all. There are a lot of divisions in society, (especially caste in Bhavnagar), so developing empathy may serve to break down some of these divisions. By learning about empathy and becoming more attuned to other's situations, children will hopefully grow up to be more aware of societal problems and will help to solve them.

Honesty and Integrity: This value is again part of the Bal Sena foundation. With the corruption being common in schools and society, children learn that this type of behavior is acceptable and thereby prolong the cycle. This module would aim to convince the children of the value of being honest and living by one's own set of values.

Independence: Independence allows children to feel comfortable completing tasks on their own and making their own choices. Many grow up without ever having left the area immediately surrounding their homes or have not gone beyond that on their own. This is especially common amongst girls. They then become afraid to travel beyond these limits and have to rely on others to complete any work. This is a problem when they have to change schools or enter high school, which is often farther from home than primary or secondary schools. Many children opt not to go to school because they do not feel comfortable getting there on their own. Independence would help solve this problem and would also build confidence.

Interpersonal Skills: It is necessary to know how to interact with different types of people at home, school, and work. Children sometimes behave the same way with adults as they do with their peers and may therefore create an unfavorable impression of themselves. Once children learn how to behave with different types of people, they will build better relationships and will be able to get what they want.

Leadership: Leadership skills help people excel in work and activities. They are particularly relevant in Bal Sena, where there are various levels of leadership. Children often wait for others to start a group activity or volunteer first, so it is important to encourage leadership amongst them. With leadership skills they will be able to address issues they face in their communities by gathering groups or committees.

Problem Solving: Children face various issues at home, school, work, and in society. Often problems seem overwhelming and it is difficult to see or find a solution to them. With problem solving skills, children will learn to break down problems into manageable parts so that they can work to find a solution. Problem solving is a key component of Bal Sena, which aims to address children's problems.

Responsibility: Learning to be responsible will hopefully make the children better students and eventually better employees. They will also be able to manage their homes and families better. If children understand their individual and societal responsibilities they will likely become more law-abiding and respectful citizens.

Saving and Value of Money: The demographic of children Shaishav works with includes families living below the poverty line or generally poor socioeconomic status. As such it is important for them to learn how to handle money and learn the value of savings. Though many of these children have grown up living hand-to-mouth, it would still be useful for them to learn about savings.

Self-Awareness: This topic deals with how a child views him or herself. It relates to self-worth and topics that stem from that such as looking after oneself. As such it includes concepts such as hygiene and personal safety. In particular communities, a lack of self-awareness was quite evident. Children were either unaware or uninterested in minding their health and safety. If someone does not feel s/he has any worth, s/he will not make efforts to improve and sustain him/herself. This module will encourage children to perform a self-assessment so that they can recognize their strengths and work on improving themselves. It will also include a component of self-discipline, which is lacking in many children.

Teamwork: Teams exist at home, school, and work, therefore it is important for children to learn how to function within a team setting. The better they are able to participate in teamwork, the better

they will fare in the workplace. Since Bal Sena is comprised of a number of different teams, teamwork skills will be useful for its members.

Seeking Information, Help, and Advice: A lot of children I observed were reluctant to ask questions when they did not understand something. They also lacked the ability to identify which questions to ask and what issues were relevant to the situation. This topic was intended to teach them how to ask questions by identifying what information was important to know. It would also teach the children how to go about finding information in society, using general knowledge resources, such as libraries or government offices.

Respect: By learning the concept and importance of respect, children would become more tolerant individuals. This would help to build the more humane society that Bal Sena is aiming for.

Unity and Equality: This value would help to bridge divisions in society and allow for cross caste and class exchange. It would lead to decreased gender discrimination, which is an issues girls face on a daily basis in school and at home.

Framing of the Modules

The life skills modules were each designed around a set of learning objectives, which are summarized in Appendix 1. The basis would be games, activities, and group discussion. The topic would be introduced with some of the basic points first and then the children would participate in an activity or game that would allow them to experience the meaning of the topic firsthand. There was a question as to whether there should be an introduction to the topic because the point is for the children to learn the lessons experientially and the points could then be clarified in the follow-up discussions. However, since these topics were likely going to be unfamiliar to the children, it seemed necessary to give them some background to focus their thoughts on the topic at hand and be able to expound from there. The idea was to initiate their thought processes with an initial clue to the point of the exercises. The young age groups of the children that would be participating in modules further justified the idea to give a general topic introduction. Younger children would be less likely to have some background in the concepts and to quickly grasp new ideas.

Another aspect that was taken into consideration in framing the modules was the culture of the target children. The concepts of cultural pertinence and appropriateness were important for shaping the content and process of the modules. One of the major points within this was interaction between genders. I wanted to encourage general interaction between boys and girls, rather than adhere to the common practices of seating them separately and having them participate in activities separately. I felt that continuing these practices would uphold commonly held ideas about gender inequality instead of teaching children otherwise from a young age. I also thought this potential type of interaction would afford an opportunity for girls to become more confident and free around boys. However, I also recognized the reasoning behind these practices and their necessity in some instances, therefore I did not want not want to encourage uncomfortable or inappropriate situations for the children. As such, I focused on activities and games that did not involve a lot of physical contact. There were some cases in which this was unavoidable, and having the girls and boys in separate groups was advisable.

Other cultural considerations in this vane were social practices and beliefs. While some of these may be things that could stand to be changed, such as the gender issue described above and inter-caste discrimination, it would be important to respect certain boundaries set by these social mores and to avoid antagonizing the children, which could result in them closing themselves off to the whole program. I chose to stay away from using religious stories, which can sometimes be useful in conveying messages about morals, because the children belong to various religious communities and I did not want to run the risk of offending any of their beliefs.

Within this idea of cultural appropriateness, it was important to build examples, anecdotes, and stories that would relate directly to their life experiences. Therefore it was necessary to observe and try to understand the general culture of Bhavnagar and some of the idiosyncrasies of particular

communities. For example, a large majority of Kumbharwada's population is comprised of recent migrants from villages. As such, the children are in close contact with village life and culture and might relate well to stories from this realm. I strived to include as many details that would relate to the children's daily lives as possible so that they would better be able to internalize the lessons and apply them to themselves.

Having observed schools, centers, and camps where children were being taught, it was clear that they responded best to games and were rarely engaged in discussions. Therefore I tried to create some kind of game or activity to introduce each concept, but also worked on designing a discussion format that might appeal more to the children than what they had been experiencing thus far. This involved making discussions more interactive, without too much talking on the part of the instructor. Discussions would encourage the children to think of examples relating to the topic from their own lives or from observations of their community, which would hopefully be more interesting for the children. They would also push children to share their opinions and reflections on the activities or games played, which would hopefully lead to insights and learning points about the topic, rather than having to answer pointed questions that might make them nervous or uncomfortable.

Some general decisions about how to frame the life skills modules and arrangement of the life skills "classroom" were based on the theories of human learning and development discussed earlier. As advised by the Social Learning Theory, the class would have to be one where children felt completely safe to participate and share their thoughts freely. Therefore the instructor would have to be particularly patient and encouraging and give space for each child to participate in some way. The modules would contain group activities and also those that involved individual participation and achievement so that the children would build confidence in their abilities. As necessitated by the Constructivist Theory, the activities in the modules would emphasize experiential learning as much as possible. The activities that focused on specific skills, as opposed to values, would be designed in such a way that the children would exercise the skill firsthand and/or experience the importance of it. This way the children would develop their own beliefs and behaviors in relation to these skills and values through a natural process, rather than merely accepting something that has been told to them. By developing their own understanding of the topics, they would be more likely to retain the lessons and practice them.

The Multiple Intelligences theory encouraged me to include a variety of activities that would appeal to different intelligences in the modules. I aimed to ensure that the modules would include activities that targeted as many of the eight capacities as possible. Modules included physical activities that would work the children's kinesthetic intelligence. The use of visual aids would be important not only because this would appeal to the children's spatial intelligence, but also because I felt this component was lacking in schools and centers. Role-plays would strengthen intra and interpersonal skills as appropriate and stories and writing exercises would work the children's linguistic capabilities.

Implementation

The life skills program was intended to be accessible to the various groups of children that Shaishav works with, therefore the modules were implemented with multiple different groups at varying locations. I will focus on my experiences with five modules in particular: Responsibility, Teamwork, Leadership, Futures, and Self-Awareness. The actual models are included in Appendix 2.

Responsibility

The responsibility module has been implemented with three different groups of children. I ran the session at a camp that was aimed at teaching about children's rights to children in Bal Sena and those involved with other child-related NGOs from around Gujarat. I also did this same module with a group of girls from Kumbharwada and then at a camp for the Bal Sena Council members (the leaders of

individual Bal Sena teams). At both camps, the children came from various backgrounds and included both government and private school students. Participants varied between 9 and 14 years of age.

The module aimed to teach participants the following points: 1. The meaning of responsibility, 2. The meaning of being responsible, 3. The importance of taking responsibility seriously, 4. Social and personal responsibility, and 5. How to be responsible. Children would ideally develop a clear understanding of the concept of responsibility, how it relates to them and their lives, and how to go about being responsible. To accomplish this task, the children would play a game in which they had to take responsibility for another person as well as be the responsibility of someone else. They would also participate in small group discussions about their personal responsibilities. Finally, the Bal Sena children would create pie charts that visually represent their personal and collective responsibilities.

The children responded positively to the game and enjoyed participating in a physical activity. During the follow-up discussion, they were able to identify the role of responsibility within the game. They discussed the difficulties faced in completing the game and we were able to relate that to the difficulty and seriousness of real life responsibilities.

The children participated in the small group discussion well and were able to identify responsibilities correctly. However, the children who were generally leaders and the most vocal tended to dominate the activity and some of the other children were disengaged. It was unclear whether this was because they did not understand the activity or because they were being overpowered by other children. Generally, the children from the less-developed residential areas who either attended government school, or rarely attended school at all, seemed to be the ones who were participating the least.

The pie chart activity was the most difficult for the children to grasp. It required more explanation than the other activities and the children ended up interpreting the assignment differently. They had difficulty identifying responsibilities that fell outside of following the rules set out for them. It seemed they did not quite understand the meaning of social responsibility or personal responsibility in a wider context.

Through implementing the responsibility module, I learned that games get better results from the children rather than small group discussions or activities. Group work can lead to certain individuals overpowering others and this could prevent them from engaging in the learning process. The concept of social responsibility would have to be clarified further and another activity may be necessary to accomplish this task. Also, it was evident that there was a difference in response to the activities based on the children's socio-economic and/or school background. As such, it might be necessary to tailor the modules further for different groups of children.

Team Building

The team building module was implemented at the Circle Point program in Anandnagar, the Community Education Centers in Devinagar and Mafatnagar, and at the child rights camp with children from different areas. The participants' ages ranged between 8 and 14. The module contains various teambuilding games to choose from or vary amongst.

The points to be covered in this module were: 1. The definition of a team, 2. Why teams are important and their benefits are, 3. The different roles within a team, 4. How to contribute to a team, 5. How to build a team. Children would learn to recognize the role that teams play in their own lives and to understand why it is important for them to learn how to work within teams. They would also learn how teams are structured and how they function as a whole. These learning points would be conveyed through games. The Anandnagar children played a game which encouraged them to pay attention to each group member and give him/her an opportunity to contribute. The Devinagar children played the same game and also played another game that involved coordination amongst all team members. The Mafatnagar center children played the same coordination game and the children at the child rights camp

played a game that required them to work together and compete with other teams to complete a task in the shortest amount of time.

As with the responsibility module, games proved to be an effective method of engaging the children. They grasped the concept of a team and naturally fell into different team roles to make the group work run more efficiently. Some of the children were reluctant to take on a leading role or participate a lot, so they may not have comprehended the importance of each individual's role within a team. The Devinagar children, in particular, had a difficult time coordinating their activities and were unable to manage themselves without looking to their teacher for help or appointing a leader to direct them. They had trouble understanding the general concept of a team and its relevance to them. The Mafatnagar children, also from Kumbharwada, have a similar background to the Devinagar children, however they were better able to organize themselves into a functioning team to complete the task at hand. The Devinagar group seemed to have the least experience working in teams relative to the other three groups of children. In general, the children were not particularly interested in any follow-up discussions and preferred to only play games. As such, the teambuilding exercises highlighted the importance of making discussions more interesting for the children. Additionally, the idea of tailoring the modules for specific communities was reaffirmed.

Leadership

The leadership module was implemented at the child rights camp. Again, the children were from varying socio-economic and educational backgrounds. Their ages ranged between 9 and 14 years. The learning points to be covered were: 1. The definition of a leader, 2. The responsibilities of a leader, 3. Why leaders are necessary, 4. Qualities of a good leader, 5. How to become a good leader, 6. Collective leadership. They would evolve an understanding of the role and responsibilities of a good leader and how to nurture the necessary skills to perform this function. This would be imparted through a team game that gave each participant an opportunity to act as leader and thereby understand the responsibilities that go along with the position. The children would also participate in a discussion about leadership qualities and collective leadership.

The children enjoyed the game overall, but also found it difficult and somewhat stressful because they were under various pressures from timings and responsibilities. The children were able to glean the role and responsibilities of a leader through the game. The discussion about the qualities of a good leader was quite productive, however the majority of the children participating were part of Bal Sena and had therefore already been trained in this topic. The visiting children were not so vocal and therefore probably needed more instruction or an activity in this particular arena to prompt their thought processes. The same was likely true for the collective leadership discussion. Bal Sena children were already familiar with this topic as it is one of the founding pillars of the collective, however the other children were not as forthright with participation.

Futures

The futures module was conducted with a varied group of children from different socio-economic classes and educational communities. The group was participating in a pilot job-shadowing program introduced by Shaishav. The children were girls and boys in 7th or 8th standard between 12 and 14 years of age. They came mainly from Kumbharwada and Chitra, an area on the outskirts of Bhavnagar city where many of the city's big industries reside. The module focused on the following learning points: 1. Dreams, 2. Goals, 3. The importance of planning for the future, 4. The importance of long-term thinking, 5. How to choose an occupation or job. The children would learn how to shift their viewpoint away from short-term focus to a more long-term life strategy. They would identify their future goals and develop a plan for how to achieve them. This would be accomplished through group discussions, a thinking activity to encourage children to contemplate their skills and interests, and individual exercises to plan for the future.

The children responded well to the activities and were open to discussing their future dreams and goals. The girls were more reluctant to share these thoughts than the boys, and some seemed to copy answers of girls who had shared before them. The children understood the goal behind skill and interest-clarifying activity were able to apply the activity to themselves. The idea of taking control of one's own future was a somewhat foreign concept to the children, especially the girls, so it was evident that the topic would need to be revisited in order to fully impress the point of planning for the future upon them.

Self-Awareness: Strengths/Weaknesses and Self-Discipline

The self-awareness module contains some varying topics and is quite long, so pieces of it were conducted with different groups of children. The module in its entirety addresses people's perceptions and understanding of themselves. It touches on the idea of taking pride in oneself and one's actions and thereby promoting personal physical health and safety and adhering to self-discipline. The section on people's understanding of themselves, i.e. their strengths and weaknesses, was implemented with the same group that participated in the futures module. This group consisted of a varied set of children between 12 and 14 years. Another module section on self-discipline was conducted with children attending the Shaishav leadership camp for Bal Sena Council members. The children represented varying schools, socio-economic backgrounds, and ages ranging between 9 and 14.

The points to be discussed were: 1. How to assess your own strengths and weaknesses and 2. How to become self-disciplined. Children would learn how to evaluate themselves and work on improving their limitations. They would also develop an understanding of self-discipline and how it relates to themselves. This would be achieved through a self-analysis exercise and role-plays on discipline. The children did not fully grasp the concept of self-analysis in order to identify their strengths and weaknesses. They were confused about what qualifies as a strength or weakness. Perhaps the children were still too young to be able to recognize their own strengths and weaknesses. The self-discipline role-plays were successful in that the children enjoyed them and gave correct answers when asked about why certain undisciplined behaviors were detrimental. However, the lessons did not seem to stick with them because the children did not follow some of the practices we had discussed in this session during the rest of the camp. Their shoes were usually in disarray, they did not sit in an organized manner, and did not always pay attention to the instructor. Self-discipline, and values in general, cannot be imparted in one module; they need to be reinforced daily by family members and schoolteachers.

Challenges

Generally, the implementation phase of the life skills program proved to be quite challenging. The fact that I was a foreigner and not completely fluent in the language and culture proved to be a hindrance in implementing the life skills modules. Given the nature of the topics, particularly that they were new concepts and many were value-based, they needed in-depth explanations. My language skills did not allow for this and so the children's clarity suffered. Additionally, Gujarati culture is based a lot on songs and sayings, which often teach lessons. These would be particularly valuable in conveying the topics to children, however an instructor who is native to the culture and language would be necessary in order to do this effectively.

A factor which exacerbated the aforementioned challenge, was the fact that the concepts being addressed in the life skills curriculum were for the most part completely foreign to the target community. While this highlights the need for such a program, it makes implementation difficult. Children in India are not accustomed to discussing feelings or similarly personal topics. They are so used to being told what to do and to following set traditions, that the idea of planning one's own future or becoming a leader seems like a strange and unattainable notion. It was often a challenge to get the children to identify with their feelings and be open to thinking for themselves.

A potential byproduct of the foreignness of the concepts, was that the children seemed uninterested in the topics much of the time. The level of apathy often differed depending on the demographic of the target group. Children who attended private schools or who had taken a serious interest in Bal Sena were more receptive to the modules. Other children who rarely attended school or worked were less interested in the topics. The children in Devinagar stated that both they and their parents were only interested in them learning how to read and write at their center. They could be temporarily distracted from their alphabets by a game, but they were loathe to participate in the follow-up discussion, which was necessary to synthesize whatever experiential learning they may have gleaned from the game. The attitude of the parents toward learning outside of reading and writing speaks to a larger challenge of convincing communities to recognize the importance of developing the character and day-to-day skills of their children.

Somewhat similar to these parents, I began to question the relevance of life skills in comparison to other issues the children were facing. While I believed in a universal need and use for life skills in children, it seemed to strange to focus on these skills when the children did not have proper healthcare or nutrition and were not attending school and were working in hazardous conditions instead. Life skills should maybe be part of a progression of development initiatives and its place might come after other health and education issues.

Sustainability

To ensure the sustainability of this life skills program, I created a manual with all the module topics that will be translated into Gujarati so that the staff will be able to utilize it effectively. They will have open access to the modules and will conduct the sessions independently at the community centers, municipal schools, circle points, and camps, as appropriate. Nearly every time I implemented one of the modules, another Shaishav staff member was present, so he or she will be able to assist others who may not fully understand the lessons after I leave. This also allowed for staff input for how to adjust the activities to make them more effective or appealing to the children.

Having Shaishav's staff implement the life skills modules will foster better understanding in the children, as staff members are often members of the communities they work in. They will be able to incorporate local knowledge and customs into their explanations and use additional local songs and games to reinforce the concepts. This will add to the sustainability of the project in that the implementation will be more effective and therefore the impact on the children will be greater. The topics will seem more relevant to the children when put into more of a local context and the positive effects of the training will encourage others to participate in it.

Another mechanism for sustainability is the "Daily Reminders" section of each module. Many of the life skills need to be reinforced on a periodic, if not daily, basis in order to truly bring about a change in the children's behavior. This guidance would ideally come from the children's parents in the home or their teachers in school, but since this component is generally lacking, it is the task of the informal education centers and camps to fill this void. The daily reminders provide simple and short exercises or activities that can be done daily and/or repeatedly in order to ingrain the module topics into the children's consciousness. Even if instructors are unable to incorporate the entire life skills curriculum into their program schedule, by adopting some of the daily reminders, they may be able to impart some of the life skills and values.

Conclusion

Life skills education can be beneficial in targeting negative behaviors in children and encouraging sound values and actions. The focus on methodology and skills rather than simple information dissemination allows life skills programs to mimic children's natural learning processes. As a result, these programs can effectively mold children's characters and behaviors. Life skills are a

necessary complement to academic education, especially in India, where schools do not emphasize developing character. They also provide an option to non-school-going children who find regular school curricula to be irrelevant to their lives, because life skills are generally universally applicable and can be further tailored to meet the needs of a specific community.

The experience with implementing a life skills program in Bhavnagar proved to be challenging because the concepts were completely new to the children. Though a child might essentially be working in a team in his/her own home as all the family members work together to complete necessary tasks, the children had difficulty in making the connection between this and learning about teamwork. They could not always relate to the topics, though attempts were made to base topic selection on the perceived needs of the children. The problem may have been that these perceived needs were from an outsider's point of view. Future life skills programs should elicit community involvement from the start. Before beginning the program, it is necessary to familiarize the children and their parents with the concept of life skills and work with them to help them recognize the value of this type of program. Without this understanding, parents and children may not be able to make the connection to see the value of certain skills in their own lives and may not be open to participating. Parents generally control or guide their children's activities, so it is important to give equal emphasis to them in this sensitization process. Issues dealing with internal reasoning and coping mechanisms are rarely discussed in these types of slum communities, especially not in conjunction with education, so it is vital to elucidate the connection between life skills and life success for community members.

Additionally, community involvement is necessary when deciding upon the content of the life skills program. Once the community understands the foundation of the program, they might be able to serve as a guide to which skills are most appropriate to them. Opening this dialogue for topic selection will also facilitate the process of convincing the community of necessary skills and topics that they may not have identified themselves. The more the community is involved from early on, the more stake they will feel in the program. Therefore they will likely take more interest in assuring that the program runs smoothly and is sustained. This interaction will also give the instructor more insight into the root causes of the problems or issues that the life skills program is trying to address, and this information will be useful in framing the modules and selecting activities and games.

One difficulty with life skills is that the topics covered are ones that cannot necessarily be taught directly; rather, they need to be nurtured over a long time period. Concepts need to be continuously reinforced and clarified in different ways. Therefore, life skills programs cannot be stand-alone programs to supplement what is lacking in schools and homes. They need to be a collaborative process with all three players involved (life skills instructor, teachers, and parents). Life skills should be added to the school curriculum in India so that the concepts can be strengthened daily. Teachers should be trained in value and life skill education as well as academic subjects. Alternatively, life skills could be taught through a long-term after-school program in which children participate regularly. In this type of setting, the skills can be taught directly, but should also be embedded in daily activities so that they naturally become part of the children's practices and value systems.

Life skills programs are an initiative that has the most value when working in collaboration with other development initiatives. They are not a replacement for education or health programs, but rather a supplement. While the fact that life skills programs' focus on methodology is one of their strong points, it is also necessary to provide people with information and raise awareness about issues, which other development initiatives may concentrate on. In my experience with implementing some of the life skills topics, I recognized needs for more in-depth work in the areas of health and labor practices, but I also appreciated that life skills' scope is limited and cannot always address these issues adequately. Consequently, I believe that life skills should be part of a collaborative process to address society and individual-based issues. In conjunction with awareness, counseling, and participatory development programs, life skills curricula can bring about holistic change in the children and their communities.

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Appendix 1 – Life Skills Topics and Goals

<i>Skills/Values</i>	<i>Learning Points</i>
Confidence*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build self-worth, good self-image • Build confidence in abilities • Public Speaking / Participation • Develop desire and confidence to achieve
Conflict resolution*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn steps for working through • What not to do • How to avoid conflict • Simple negotiation skills
Coping with Emotions*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify root cause • Talk through things, don't bottle • Move on (write down, etc.) • Anger management • Dealing with grief and anxiety • Coping skills for dealing with loss, abuse, trauma
Coping with Stress* (Time Management)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify stress and causes • How to avoid • Stay Calm, Assess, Act • Relaxation Techniques • Time Management: Set goals • Prioritize Tasks • Create schedules and plans • Clarify thoughts • Stay organized
Creativity* and Resourcefulness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop new ways of thinking, acting, creating • Emphasize thinking outside the box • Use all resources at disposal • Use to facilitate opportunities
Critical Thinking*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze situations • Assess
Decision-making*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why decisions are important • How they affect future • Steps
Long-term Thinking / Future / Strategies for Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan for the future • Goal-setting* • Determination: Emphasize importance of commitment in achieving goals • Do not give up when difficulty arises • Stay focused on goals • Motivation: Passion for something leads to success • Set life goals

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Ethic: Don't do things half-heartedly • Must treat all tasks as though important • Consistency in work • Positivity/Optimism: Don't get bogged down by negativity • Risk Taking/Initiative: Don't be afraid to do something outside the norms • Many successes started as risks • Take initiative (things don't come to you) • Self-help • Understanding Change: Don't get stuck in routine • Be flexible to change • Strategic Thinking: Spotting exploiting, creating opportunities
Effective Communication* (listening and conveying)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening vs. Hearing • Speaking • Conveying thoughts • Body Language • Giving and Receiving Feedback • Saying no
Empathy*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is it? • Why is it important? • Ability to understand others' feelings • Ability to express understanding
Honesty / Integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow conscience • Do Good • Why important • Difference between real and make-believe • Be good to others • Non-violence
Independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to be independent as a child • Why important
Interpersonal Skills*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peers • Family • Superiors • Customer Relations
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What makes a good leader? • Roles and responsibilities • How to be a leader
Problem-solving*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steps
Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social • Personal • How to be responsible • Be accountable • Why important

Saving and Value of money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use money wisely • Keep track of money • Should not spend whatever you earn • Why saving important • Simplicity
Self-Awareness*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-worth • Recognize strengths and weaknesses • Take care of yourself – stay well, hygiene • Awareness of rights, influences, values, attitudes
Teamwork*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is a team? • How do teams work? • How are teams valuable? • Where do they occur in real life? • Respect team members • Contribution
Seeking information, help, advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why and when useful • How to go about it • Asking questions • Researching
Respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect elders • Behave properly with others • Obedience
Unity and Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share • Don't be greedy • Give back to others and society • No discrimination • Treat all fairly and equally • Impartiality and neutrality • Objectivity and open-mindedness • Justice and Peace

Appendix 2 – Responsibility Module

Unit:	Personal Skills
Topic:	Responsibility
Age Group:	11-14

Learning Objectives:

1.	What is the meaning of responsibility?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A task, chore, or job that is up to you to complete. It is your job to make sure it gets done. - Examples: Your responsibility to look after your things in your satchel; Parents’ responsibility to earn money for the family; Teacher’s responsibility to prepare for class to teach subjects.
2.	What is the meaning of being responsible?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Generally, being responsible means taking your responsibilities seriously. - Accountability: if you say you will do something, you will do it - When you say you will do something, you try your best to do it.
3.	Why is it important to take responsibility seriously?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Often other people depend on you fulfilling a responsibility. - Example: Your boss tells you it is your responsibility to write a report and if it doesn’t get done, the company will have to shut down. While it is only your responsibility to get it done, if you don’t do it properly many other people will also suffer. - Example: If you are the head of Bal Sena and you promise to organize a program and you don’t, there will be hundreds of disappointed children.
4.	Social and Personal Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - You have personal responsibilities that pertain to yourself, such as feeding yourself or keeping yourself safe. - There are also responsibilities that are specifically assigned to you, such as looking after a younger sibling or completing your homework. - Then there are social responsibilities, which are not always directly explained to anyone, but many people understand them. It is your social responsibility not to do anything that will harm others or will damage the space that you share with others. For example, you must not ride your scooter dangerously because you could injure someone else. You should not throw your garbage in the parks because that will ruin them for everyone else.

		- Even if others don't keep up their social responsibilities, it is important for you to do so and set an example for others.
5.	How to be responsible?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Only take on responsibilities that you are certain you can handle. - Take the responsibility seriously, keep track of timings and schedules, and make your best effort to do a good job. - Be accountable for your work. If others check up on you, you should be able to update them on your progress. If you are unable to do something, you should be able to admit so beforehand and ask for help. - Keep in mind that others will be affected by your work.

Procedure:

1. Discussion – Introduction

- a) What is the meaning of responsibility? Ask the children to give examples.
- b) What is the meaning of being responsible? Ask the children to give examples.
- c) Why is it important to take responsibility seriously?
- d) Pose scenarios to the children where someone was given a responsibility and ask what happens if he/she doesn't fulfill it. Examples: Rahul was instructed to milk the cows for a week while his uncle was away. If Rahul does not, people who need the milk will not receive it, Rahul's uncle will lose out on income from the milk, and the cows' udders will get full and this could affect the cows' health.

2. Activity – Responsibility Bridge

- a) Break the children into groups of 3-4.
- b) Draw a path on the ground with some curves and turns using tape or chalk.
- c) Explain that this path represents a bridge over fast-moving, rocky waters. If someone is to step off the path, i.e. fall off the bridge, he/she might get seriously injured or drown.
- d) Explain that the object of the game is for team members to lead one blindfolded member along the path by giving verbal directions only. No one is allowed to touch the blindfolded child to lead him or her along. (In other words, it is the team members' responsibility to lead their friend across the bridge safely.
- e) One or all of the team members can take turns being blindfolded. They can switch directions along the path so that the last child to be blindfolded will not have memorized the steps.
- f) Learning Points (for the instructor to keep in mind):
 1. *Meaning of Responsibility* – the blindfolded child's life is in your hands so if you make a mistake, he/she will suffer. The same is true in real life when you take on any responsibilities.
 2. *Trust* – the blindfolded child must learn to trust his/her teammates and the teammates must trust themselves to be able to do it.

3. *Teamwork* – the children giving directions must figure out a way to work together and not give conflicting directions, talk at the same time, or confuse the blindfolded child.
4. *Support* – rather than physically leading the blindfolded child along, the children are giving him/her just enough support to make it through by him/herself. They are not solving the problem for the child, but rather giving him/her the tools to make it through.

3. Follow-up Discussion – Responsibility Bridge

- a) How did it feel to be the blindfolded person? What was difficult/easy?
- b) How did it feel to be the person giving instructions? What was difficult/easy?
- c) What responsibilities did you have in this game in either role?
- d) What would have happened to the blindfolded person if the instructors made a mistake?
- e) What is the meaning of responsibility?
- f) Would it have been better to lead the blindfolded person by hand? Why/why not?
- g) How did trust play into this game?
- h) Was it easy or hard to trust your teammates? What would have made it easier?
- i) How did teamwork play into this game? What was easy or hard about it?

4. Discussion – Social and Personal Responsibility

- a) Social vs. Personal responsibility. Discuss the meanings and differences and ask the children to give examples of both.
- b) Why is social responsibility important? When people follow them, society functions better.
- c) Pose scenarios where social responsibility plays a role and ask the children what will happen if no one complies.
- d) Example 1: It is a social responsibility not to litter in public places. What will happen if no one follows this? (Parks and streets will be full of garbage and it will be difficult and unpleasant to walk around anywhere.)
- e) Example 2: It is a social responsibility to ride your vehicles in an orderly manner. What will happen if no one follows this? (If everyone drives crazily and zigzags across roads or drives through circles, there will be many accidents and people will get hurt.)
- f) Ask the children to collectively make a list of social responsibilities that exist or that they think should exist. Also explain why they should exist.

5. Discussion – How to be responsible

- a) Only take on responsibilities that you are certain you can handle.
- b) Take the responsibility seriously, keep track of timings and schedules, and make your best effort to do a good job.
- c) Be accountable for your work. If others check up on you, you should be able to update them on your progress. If you are unable to do something, you should be able to admit so beforehand and ask for help.
- d) Keep in mind that others will be affected by your work.

6. Review

- a) Ask review questions about all the learning points.
- b) Watch for understanding and assimilation.
- c) Make note of points where understanding seems lacking.
- d) Make notes on which activities they seemed to enjoy more than others.

7. Homework

- a) Think about what personal responsibilities you have and whether you are fulfilling them properly. If not, make a plan for how to help yourself become more responsible. Example: If your responsibility is to help your mother prepare a tiffin before you leave for school but you keep sleeping late and don't have time to help her, make a plan to start going to bed early and waking up half an hour earlier.
- b) Think about what social responsibilities you have and whether you are living up to them. If not, list the actions you are going to change in order to become more socially responsible.
- c) Discuss social responsibility with your family and friends and try to convince them to comply with them.
- d) The next time someone presents you with a responsibility, consider whether you will be able to handle it effectively before agreeing to take it on.

8. Daily Reminder Activities

- a) Assign each child a small responsibility, such as setting up the blackboard or making sure garbage is properly discarded, that s/he is in charge of on a continuous basis. This could rotate on a daily or weekly basis.

Appendix 3 – Teambuilding Module

Unit:	Social Skills
Topic:	Team Building
Age Group:	11-14

Learning Objectives:

1. What is a team?

- 2+ people working together toward a common goal

2. Why are teams important? What are the benefits

- Most large tasks involve working in groups so one must know how to function in them. They can be found at work, home, play, government, etc.

- Promotes efficiency and provides a larger pool of ideas and varied skill sets

3. What are the different roles within a team?

- Leaders, Supporters, Organizers. Everyone should shift roles as appropriate

4. How to contribute to a team?

- Add something valuable, share ideas, be productive. Don't always just follow or create extra work.

5. How to build a team?

- Sometimes teams are already set and you have to work within them. Otherwise gather people who get along with each other and who have skills or qualities that you admire and would be useful. Make sure to diversify and have a varied set of skills sets and personality types. Make sure everyone is clear and working toward a common goal.

Procedure:

1. Discussion - Introduction

a) What is a team?

b) What are some examples of teams? (cricket, bal sena)

2. Activity – Building a Story

Goal: Children will each contribute one sentence to create a story.

a) Ask for two volunteers.

b) Ask each volunteer to give you a simple sentence about any topic. It can be funny or serious.

c) Ask the two children to stand at opposite ends of the room in front of the class. The child to the left's sentence will be the first sentence in the story. The other child's sentence will be the last. Have the children repeat their sentences in order.

d) Each of the other children must stand up one-by-one and add a sentence so that ultimately the story will make sense. (The earlier they participate, the easier it is. The last few children to go will have to work the hardest to make sure everything makes sense.) When the children come up with a sentence, they can stand anywhere in between the two starting children, i.e. they can put their sentence right in the middle of the story by standing in the center. The goal is for everyone to work together, listening to each other, and making adjustments accordingly.

e) Whenever a new sentence is added, everyone standing must repeat their sentences in order.

- f) Once everyone has contributed, have the children repeat the entire story and decide whether it makes sense.

3. Follow-up Discussion

- a) What did we learn?

In a team everyone must work together toward a common goal. In so doing you must listen to each other carefully and respect everyone's ideas.

4. Discussion – Team Roles

- a) What is the structure of a team?
- b) What are the different roles within a team?
- c) Who plays which role?
- d) How should teams function?
- e) Must have designated leaders (may rotate) otherwise chaotic.

5. Discussion – Benefits / Importance of Teams

- a) Why are teams important? (make work more efficient and organized). Give an example.
- b) Can you give examples of how teams are helpful in real life? (1 person picks up all the garbage around school vs. team; rope-making 1 person cannot do all steps)
- c) Teams are also important because they provide a larger set of ideas and skills to pull from. Let us see how...

6. Activity – Pooling Resources

Goal: Demonstrate how working together creates more ideas

- a) Pose a question to the group that asks for suggestions, i.e. How can we improve our school?
- b) Give the children 1 minute to individually come up with suggestions. Ask them to either memorize them or write them down.
- c) After the minute is over, put the children into groups of 3-4.
- d) Ask them to share their ideas for 5 minutes.
- e) Also have each person count the number of ideas they had individually and then as a group, count the number of distinct ideas they had collectively.
- f) Have each group present these statistics to the class.

7. Follow-up Discussion

- a) What did we learn?

When you are in a team you have multiple brains working toward the same goal, so you have more ideas and more manpower.

8. Discussion – Teams in Action

- a) Emphasize: Must learn how to work in teams because teams are everywhere
- b) Give examples of teams at home, school, public life, and WORK.
- c) Can you give examples of teams in real life? (encourage them think more about it than they did before and be more creative with their answers)

9. Discussion – Forming Teams

- a) Emphasize: Often you are put into a team that already exists, but sometimes you have to form them yourself or make adjustments to existing teams.
- b) How do you form a team? (choose good people who will be useful for your goal)

10. Activity – Building a Team

Goal: Have the children create their own employee team in a specific scenario.

- a) Give the children a scenario, such as starting a grocery store.
- b) Ask them who they would want in their team, i.e. an accountant (or someone good with math), someone who is organized to stock shelves, someone who is good with customers.
- c) If they are not coming up with their own suggestions, prompt them with your own good and bad suggestions. E.g. Would you want a good salesperson? (yes), Would you want a good carpenter? (no)
- d) This can either be done as a whole class or have the children break-up into teams and report their list at the end.
- e) Emphasize skill sets AND personality types in choosing teams. What types of people would they like to work with?

11. Activity – Team Game

Goal: Synthesize team lessons by having children work together to silently line up in order of birth date.

- a) Explain the goal to the children: They will have X amount of time (you may or may not want to give them a time limit) to line up in order of date of birth. Be sure to specify which end is younger and older. The trick is, though, they must do it in complete silence. They may use hand gestures, etc. but no whispering or speaking at all.
- b) Give the children 2 minutes to plan how they will go about the task. Ask them to assign two leaders. Explain that they are not supposed to discuss their birth dates during these two minutes, only planning how they will communicate once they are silent.
- c) After the 2 minutes, the children should begin lining up. Maybe make a rule that if someone talks they must sit out for the rest of the game.
- d) Everyone should raise their hand once they all think they are finished.
- e) Once finished, go down the line and have everyone give their birth date to see if they were successful or not.

12. Follow-up Discussion

- a) How did it go? What was easy? What was difficult?
- b) How was your communication?
- c) Was it helpful to have leaders?
- d) Did everyone pay proper attention to and give respect to each other?
- e) How would you do it better next time?

13. Discussion – Evaluation

- a) Reiterate main topics
- b) Pose questions to the children about the main topics covered
- c) Assess comprehension and absorption and make note of which topics may need to be revisited.

14. Homework

- a) Identify teams that you are a part of
- b) Identify teamwork within your community and analyze the roles of the various participants
- c) Identify cases or situations within your community where teamwork might be more effective than what is currently being done
- d) Create a small project and form a team to complete it

15. Daily Reminders

- a) Create teams to handle daily chores in the classroom
- b) Come up with small group craft projects that can be done periodically

Appendix 4 – Leadership Module

Unit:	Social Skills
Topic:	Leadership
Age Group:	11-14

Learning Objectives:

1.	What is a leader?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A leader is someone who directs a group of people in a task, vision, movement, etc. - S/he often gives instructions and makes final decisions. - S/he is often a source of inspiration and motivation for the people s/he is leading.
2.	What are the responsibilities of a leader?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To identify and communicate the goal of the group or team - To direct group members in completing the task / achieving the goal. - To take responsibility for and make sure that the goal of the group is achieved on time and in a sound and efficient manner. - The leader must assume whatever other responsibilities that are required for the above three to be met.
3.	Why are leaders necessary?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To organize a team (without leaders it is chaotic) - To delegate tasks to best person (makes work more efficient) - To motivate team members (need a reason to work) - To lead toward a vision (leaders have the final goal in mind and direct group toward it) - To resolve conflicts amongst team members and from outside team - To manage time and keep people on task - To take responsibility for work - To fill in where needed / where others can't meet requirements
4.	What are some qualities of a good leader?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - See attached list. - Generally a leader should have good organizational and interpersonal skills. - S/he should be able to inspire, motivate, instruct, and direct those around him/her.
5.	How to become a good leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Try to develop the personal qualities that make a good leader, i.e. try to be fair in all your interactions, or try to keep yourself organized - Take on whatever leadership positions are available at

		school or in your community. Once you act as a leader, you will recognize skills you need and/or need to work on.
6.	Collective Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having a leadership body consisting of more than one person that fulfills the role of a leader. - Beneficial because it prevents dictatorships from forming and allows for more creativity and idea generation. - Promotes equality and unity.

Procedure:

1. Discussion – Introduction

- a) What is a leader?
- b) What are the responsibilities of leaders?
- c) Why are leaders necessary?

2. Game – “Everyone is a Leader”

a) Steps:

- Divide the children into groups of 5.
- Assign each group member a number from 1-5; each number group will be given a different task to complete.
- The instructor(s) should call up all the #1s, 2s, 3s, etc. separately to give their specific task instructions. It is best if there are 5 instructors available to give each number group its specific instructions at the same time.
- The children must write down the instructions themselves and then go to the Materials Station (this should be set up ahead of time, with all the materials that the children will need to complete their tasks) to get the materials they think will be necessary. The instructors can also provide the necessary materials ahead of time if need be.
- The instructions should be made very clear and should only be given out once; it is the child’s responsibility to make sure to listen carefully and write everything down correctly.
- The children are not supposed to show the written instructions to anyone else.
- The object of the game is to have each child lead his/her team members in completing one task.
- During each task, the leader should only be giving instructions, not doing the work.
- The children will be given a time limit within which to complete all 5 tasks. About 30 minutes (not including instruction and material gathering time) should be sufficient. Alternatively, there can be a time limit for each task: about 3-5 minutes. Creating a sense of urgency can make the game more exciting for the children, but the instructor has to make sure that there is enough time for the children to actually practice leading.
- Optional: Have each child come up with one encouraging phrase that they will use to motivate their team during their task exercise.
- Optional: Instruct the leaders to make each team member initial the part of the task that he/she worked on to ensure equal participation.

b) Learning Points:

- *Keep team goals in mind* – all tasks must be completed correctly and on time.
- *Responsibility of leaders* – must take down instructions properly and gather all necessary materials. If this is not done properly, the team cannot succeed.
- *Learn to take and give instructions* – he/she is the only one who knows what is required for his/her task and must be able to convey the information to others.
- *Watch out for participation* – the leader must make sure each team member contributes.
- *Motivate team* – since there is a time limit, the leader will have to ensure that the team works efficiently.

c) Tasks:

- Note: The tasks are listed in a specific order so that they become increasingly difficult. They are designed such that each one has at least four parts to it so each of the four team members being led should be able to participate fully.
- (1) Cut 4 4cm squares and put dots on one, lines on one, stars on one, and crosses on one. (1 one-side, 1 pair scissors, 1 ruler)
- (2) Draw a picture of a village. The picture must have 2 trees, 1 elephant, 1 house, and 1 water body with fish. (1 one-side, 1 pen/pencil)
- (3) Count the number of girls, boys, female instructors, and male instructors present and write them down. Get a total figure. (1 scrap of paper)
- (4) Have each group member write down his or her name. Next to their name the 1s should put their favorite fruit, 2s their favorite color, 3s their favorite animal, and 5s their favorite sweet. (1 half-sheet)
- (5) Form the Gujarati letter 'na' (G) on the floor using your bodies.
- (5) Alternative: Simple paper craft: Dog Face. Fold and tear off part of the rectangular paper so that it becomes a square, Fold the square in half so that it becomes a triangle, Keeping the long side of the triangle on top, fold down the left and right corners to make two ears, Fold up the top layer of the bottom corner to make the nose. (1 one-side)

d) Discussion Questions:

- How did it feel to be the leader? What was easy? What was difficult?
- How did it feel to be the supporter? What was easy? What was difficult?
- Was there ever a time when you as the leader did not know what to do or how to do something? Did other team members make suggestions? How did you react to them?
(Leaders should recognize that they do not always have all the answers and so should encourage other team members to make suggestions and should use them when appropriate)
- What responsibilities did the leader have?
- What would happen if the leader did not take down instructions properly? (i.e. what happens when the leader does not fulfill his/her responsibility?)
- How did your leaders encourage or motivate you?
- What responsibilities did the supporters have?
- Did everyone in your team participate on all tasks? Why/Why not?
- What was the goal of your group? (to complete all tasks on time)
- What are the good leadership qualities you observed?
- What are qualities or actions you think a leader should avoid?
- Did you enjoy having each person shift roles?
- Why are shifting roles beneficial? (collectives)

3. Discussion – Qualities of a good leader

- a) Ask the children to name qualities they think a leader should have and explain why those qualities are important.
- b) Introduce real life examples of leaders, such as Gandhi, Narendra Modi, or Mangal Pandey, and discuss their good and/or bad leadership qualities.
- c) Depending on what the children volunteer, try to go over some of the qualities in the following list:

Adaptable	Balance	Building trust
Communication	Community	Confidence
Creative	Dedication	Empathy
Equality	Enthusiasm	Ethics
Honesty	Influential	Initiative
Inspiring	Integrity	Interpersonal Skills
Know when to follow	Knowledge of situation	Lead by example
Motivation	Motivator	Open-Minded
Organization	Passionate	Patience
Perseverance	Positive Example	Prepared
Productive	Purpose-driven	Realistic
Reliable	Respect	Respect for Authority
Responsible	Role Model	Selflessness
Sets the example	Supportive	Teamwork
Will	Wisdom	

4. Discussion – How to become a good leader

- a) Ask the children what they think they can do to develop leadership skills
- b) Advise them to try to develop the personal qualities that make a good leader, i.e. try to be fair in all your interactions, or try to keep yourself organized
- c) Advise them to take on whatever leadership positions are available at school or in your community. Once you act as a leader, you will recognize skills you need and/or need to work on.
- d) Ask for ideas for leadership activities they can take on and then give some examples, such as: Bal Sena or sports teams.

5. Discussion – Collective Leadership

- a) What is collective leadership?
- b) Why is it important or beneficial?
- c) Give example of Bal Sena's collective leadership structure: Captain, Vice-Captain, 2 Core Team Members

6. Review – go over learning points

7. Homework – work on becoming a good leader in the manner we just discussed

8. Daily Reminders

- a) When there is a simple task that needs to be directed, ask for volunteers from the class to act as the teacher/leader.
- b) Give reminders on the qualities of a good leader.
- c) Talk about current events and focus on leadership.

Appendix 5 – Futures Module

Unit:	Personal Skills
Topic:	Futures
Age Group:	11-14

Learning Objectives:

1.	What are (your) dreams?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dreams are your hopes for the future - They are a picture of your life if you could choose anything for yourself - In the context of futures, dreams should be something that you believe is attainable. For example a dream to be a famous singer when you cannot sing well is not realistic. - Think about what your dreams are...
2.	What are (your) goals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Goals are concrete steps to complete in order to attain your dreams - They set future tasks to work toward
3.	Why is it important to plan for the future?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Without a plan it is easy to lose focus and be swayed by various external factors - Planning forces you to seriously consider your dreams and goals and to investigate the necessary information and steps in order to reach your dream
4.	Why is long-term thinking important? (As opposed to making decisions based on today / short-term)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The decisions you make today will affect your future in terms of what opportunities will be available to you (if you choose to skip college and join an unskilled job, you will limit yourself to that one job and level) - Sometimes a decision might seem attractive in the short-run, but will actually cause you more problems in the long-run (choosing a job that is hazardous to your health but will pay good money in the short-run, will result in health problems and related costs in the long-run)
5.	How do you choose an occupation or job?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consider your interests - Consider your skills - Consider your current educational status and whether that will allow you to complete the necessary education to get the desired job

Procedure:

1. Discussion – Introduction

- a) What are dreams?
- b) What makes a dream realistic or attainable dream?
- c) What are goals?

2. Activity – Dreams and Goals

- a) Divide the children into small groups of 3-4 if there is a large number of children, otherwise the activity can be completed and presented individually.
- b) Instruct the children to think about their dreams for their futures and share them with their group or with the class if they are working individually. They can present the dreams verbally or depict them in some form, if they so choose.
- c) Ask the children to individually choose one of their dreams that seems realistic to them and list goals for how to work toward this dream.

3. Discussion – Importance of Future Planning

- a) Why is it important to think about your future? Ask the children to volunteer answers before going into the instructions.
- b) Why is it important to plan for your future? Ask the children to volunteer answers before going into the instructions.
- c) Give some hypothetical situations where planning helped a person to stay on course. For example, create a story about a boy who wanted to become a scientist but he didn't realize this until he was in 11th standard and he had only received the marks to study commerce so could not achieve his dream. Or, a girl who wanted to become a teacher but didn't know how to go about it and didn't have a plan so her parents convinced her to do something else instead.

4. Discussion – Importance of Long-Term Thinking

- a) Why is it important to think about the long-term and not just the short-term? Ask the children to volunteer answers before going into the instructions.
- b) Give hypothetical situations or examples of how today's decisions can affect one's future. Discuss in particular the long-term effects of current health hazards and limited education.

5. Discussion – How to Choose an Occupation

- a) Think about your interests
- b) Think about your skills
- c) Think about your current education and educational prospects
- d) Which jobs involve your interests?
- e) Which jobs employ your skills?
- f) Which jobs' education requirements match yours?

6. Activity – Spectrum Game for Skills

This activity will encourage the children to start thinking about their skills and interests and how they relate to potential careers. It will help them to clarify their skills and interests.

- a) Have the children form a line with each child standing behind the person in front, all facing the same direction.
- b) Instruct the children that you will be making a series of statements and the children have to move to one side or the other depending on their level of agreement with the statement.
- c) Indicate which way (their left or right) indicates agreement or disagreement with the statement and instruct the children to take steps to the left or right when they agree or disagree with the statement. If they are unsure of how they feel, they can stay in the same spot.

- d) Remind them that this is a personal thinking exercise and there is no right or wrong answer. The children should follow their own ideas and move accordingly, not based on what other children are doing.
- e) The statements should relate to skills and interests that are common to professions and jobs that are available to the children. Sample statements: I enjoy working with people, I like to take care of other people, I find math easy, I enjoy math, I prefer to make my own schedule rather than follow other people's timings, I like to take charge, Being a leader comes easy to me, I like to work with my hands, I like to be creative, I am creative, I like to do something different everyday, I enjoy working outside, I like to figure out how things work, I prefer to keep things orderly, I enjoy reading, I enjoy writing, I write well, Science comes easily to me, etc.
- f) Have a short follow-up discussion to find out what the children thought of the exercise and what they thought the point was. Explain the logic behind the activity after the children give their thoughts.

7. Discussion – Job Search

- a) Instruct the children to list their interests (can be anything, not just in relation to work)
- b) Instruct the children to list their skills
- c) Instruct the children to list their educational status (i.e. marks and/or path of study depending on what standard they are in)
- d) Instruct the children to think about which jobs match all three: skills, interests, and educational eligibility.

8. Review – go over learning points

9. Homework

- a) Go to the local career guidance center (Vikaas Vartu) to research potential careers
- b) Talk to adults in your community about their careers/professions and how they got to the place they are today
- c) Try to find a mentor in the field your interested in

10. Daily Reminders

- a) Discuss a different profession each day and cover the educational requirements, skill requirements, and places where this type of professional would work (i.e. an accountant can work in a bank, organization, government, etc.)
- b) Focus on one skill per day and discuss what types of jobs this skill can be useful in
- c) Focus on one skill that is common in many jobs and discuss how the children can develop this skill

Appendix 6 – Self-Awareness Module

Unit:	Personal Skills
Topic:	Self-Awareness
Age Group:	11-14

Learning Objectives:

1.	What is self-awareness?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Involves understanding and appreciating yourself - Understanding your strengths and weaknesses - Taking pride in yourself so that you look after your physical and mental health - Taking pride in yourself so that you be the best that you can be in terms of education and personal habits and behaviors - Self-discipline and integrity
2.	What are strengths and weaknesses?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengths include skills and activities that you are good at and good qualities that you possess. - Weaknesses are skills, activities, or qualities that you are unsatisfied with your abilities in and which you can work on to improve.
3.	What is involved in physical health?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hygiene: keeping one's body and living areas clean so as to prevent disease - Nutrition: providing the body with necessary vitamins and minerals to promote good health and development - Physical Safety: keeping one's body safe from harmful external factors, such as electricity, sharp objects, and poisonous substances
4.	What is self-discipline?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Following your own and imposed rules without having to be instructed to do so - Following rules of good behavior on your own - Following these rules even when there are temptations to do otherwise or when it would be easier not to

Procedure:

1. Discussion – Introduction

- a) What is self-awareness?
- b) What is the effect of self-awareness on you?
- c) Why is it important to be self-aware?

2. Discussion – Strengths and Weaknesses

- a) What is a strength? Ask for and give examples after giving a definition.
- b) What is a weakness? Ask for and give examples after giving a definition.

- c) Point out how everyone has different strengths and weaknesses, that is one reason why people work together.

3. Activity – S.W.O.T. Analysis

This activity will give the children the opportunity to do a self-analysis and identify where their strengths lie and where there is room for improvement.

- a) Explain the concept of S.W.O.T. (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats). This S.W.O.T. will be in relation to children's personal development so that strengths and weaknesses refer to the current capacities of each child, opportunities refer to chances for improvement of weaknesses and strengths, and threats refers to obstacles that may come in the way of this improvement.
- b) Instruct the children to individually complete a S.W.O.T. analysis on themselves. Assure them that this is a personal exercise that will not be shared with anyone else unless the individual wants to, so everyone should be as honest as possible.
- c) Give the children 15-20 minutes to complete the exercise.
- d) Once they have finished, ask them to create a plan of action to address one of their weaknesses.
- e) Discuss how this S.W.O.T. analysis will be useful to them (it is a mechanism for self-improvement and will also help them to plan for their future careers).

4. Discussion – Physical Health

- a) Hygiene – see individual module
- b) Nutrition – see individual module
- c) Injury Prevention – see individual module

5. Discussion – Self-Discipline

- a) What is self-discipline?
- b) How do you develop self-discipline?
- c) As a group, identify rules that everyone feels are important. Then list actions and behaviors that match these rules. Instruct the children that by making a personal pledge to follow these actions despite external factors and temptations, they will be practicing self-discipline.

6. Activity – Self-Discipline

This activity will illustrate the personal and social benefits of self-discipline.

- a) Pre-prepare a set of role-plays that depict discipline issues that come up commonly in the children's lives. For example: drinking water properly, putting away shoes properly, speaking respectfully with elders, sitting in an orderly fashion, etc.
- b) The instructor and an assistant or volunteer from the children will depict two scenes. In one scene the actor will be disciplined in an activity and in the other scene, the actor will be undisciplined in the same activity. For example, in scene one the person kicks off his/her shoes and leaves them in disarray and in scene two, the person takes off his/her shoes carefully and puts them away neatly, or vice versa.
- c) The children will have to identify which scene is which (disciplined vs. undisciplined)
- d) Ask the children to explain what the problems with the undisciplined scene were.
- e) Ask the children to explain the benefits of the disciplined behavior.
- f) After having performed 4-6 different role-plays, ask the children to volunteer to do a role-play based on a topic that has not been covered that they feel is important.

7. Review – go over learning points

8. Homework

- a) Think about how you take care of your physical health and create a plan of action to improve these habits as you feel is necessary
- b) Think about your self-discipline and make a plan to address the issues where you feel your discipline is lacking
- c) Update your S.W.O.T. analysis every 2-3 months to see the progress on addressing your weaknesses and to adjust for any changes in your situation.

9. Daily Reminders

- a) Come up with self-affirmation exercises?
- b) Remind the children that they are worthy individuals?
- c) Remind children about self-discipline by pointing out mistakes without naming the person(s) involved.