



# AHEEN Integrative Social-Emotional-Learning for displaced youth

Developmental neuroscience insights confirm that for optimal development the human brain requires

- social relationships
- emotional experiences and
- cognitive opportunities.

The quality of these relationships, experiences and opportunities shapes neurocognitive development. In contexts in which any of these dimensions is severely impoverished, the overall quality of learning is seriously compromised.

At AHEEN we focus on how displaced youth can best acquire skill sets that engage the whole brain. When faced with challenges we identify the skills our learners need to overcome them and embed these skills in our Integrative SEL module all AHEEN students complete over the course of nine months.

We are proud to share this research brief that demonstrates how we applied our innovative approach to the challenge of living together peacefully in displacement. Our results illustrate that when we apply scientific principles to learning in displacement contexts and combine this with more locally led approaches, both individuals and communities stand to benefit in a sustainable way and become adaptive experts.



**DEPA**

[\(USAID 2023\)](#)



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# AHEEN SEL for peace – Methodology

## AHEEN-DEPA Research design

### Exploratory sequential

1. Initial exploration of PEACE as a concept/construct
2. Verification of PEACE as a concept/construct among AHEEN students through program implementation
3. Verification of PEACE as a concept/construct among Higher Education students in Kakuma/Dadaab through M&E
4. Creation of a larger-scale survey among the education community in Kakuma/Dadaab and extension of model to secondary school students

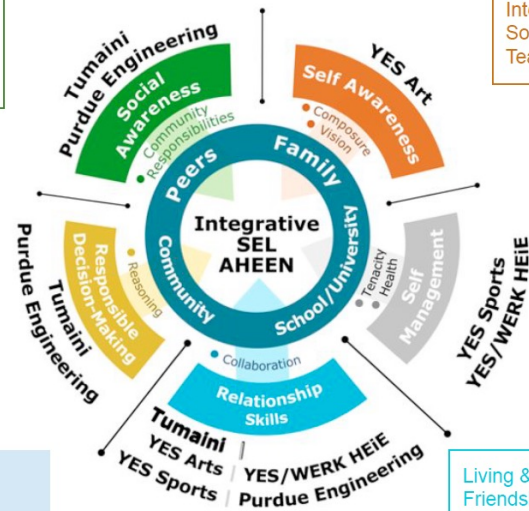




# AHEEN SEL for peace – data collection

Resource sharing  
Solidarity  
Community  
Intergenerational cohesion  
Team collaboration

Living & working together  
Intergenerational cohesion  
Social well-being  
Team member effectiveness



Team collaboration  
Team member effectiveness

Community  
Mental well-being  
Social well-being  
Team member effectiveness

Living & working together  
Friendship  
Acknowledging & respecting differences  
Community  
Intergenerational cohesion  
Social well-being  
Team collaboration  
Team member effectiveness

What is peace in displacement contexts?

## Findings

- The skill sets and competencies identified in the model and allocated to the 3 components of the Integrative SEL wheel were assessed in a final survey that combined both cross-sectional and retrospective approaches as we had not administered a base-line survey.
- The return rate was 80% (sample size: 29) in the anonymous on-line survey. 30% also submitted a sample media file with their reflections on peace.
- On all the skills sets and competencies we found largely significant changes in behavior indicating increasing expertise on part of respondents in skills and competencies that promote peaceful coexistence. These changes were already visible when respondents compared their past behavior and experiences (prior to program start) and present (at the end of the program), and became even more pronounced as participants anticipated their future behavior.
- A qualitative analysis of free responses also revealed respondents' regular use of terms such as team collaboration, togetherness, joint decision-making, helping others, being motivated to do the best they can and eagerness to learn more.





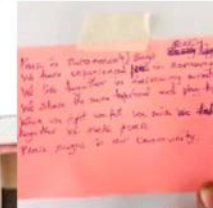
# AHEEN SEL for peace – highlights

Verification of PEACE as a concept/construct among AHEEN students through program implementation

## SPORTS



## APPLIED ARTS



Verification of PEACE as a concept/construct among AHEEN students through program implementation

## LOCALISED ENGINEERING



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# AHEEN SEL for peace – impacts/outputs

## INNOVATION

*The innovation has three dimensions:*

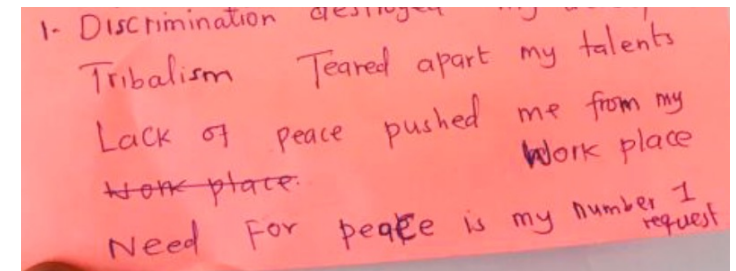
- **Conceptual:** We re-analysed the concept of peace in terms of skills and competencies required of someone to practice peaceful coexistence using an interdisciplinary approach as we combined peace studies and cognitive psychology and cognitive neuroscience
- **Methodological:** We had refugees themselves analyse the concept of peace and what it meant for them before allocating specific skill sets to each of the parameters they identified
- **Pedagogical:** We then embedded the teaching and learning in the very context in which refugees lived to ensure that learning was contextualized and skills acquired that were both useful and cherished in that context by youth.

## AHEEN SEL Curriculum Materials

**Sports:** 3 months of structured athletics training

**Applied Arts:** 3 months of Facilitation Theory, Evaluation + Reflection and a *Practical Component:* Project Planning + Delivery

**Localised engineering:** 3 months of community-centered engineering with prototype development (power supply, IT labs, water management)



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