



THE BOOK ABOUT ME

MANUAL

REFERENCE



ICRC

**THE BOOK
ABOUT ME**
MANUAL

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This toolkit is based on the Birds in Flight programme, developed by the Swedish Red Cross in 2010, and has been adapted to address the needs of children affected by armed conflict and other violence by the mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) team at the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

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INTRODUCTION

The Book About Me is part of the Birds in Flight programme, which was started in 2010 by the Swedish Red Cross to address the needs of children who have developed or are at risk of developing mental health conditions from war, torture or forced migration.

We know that children who have encountered war, torture or forced migration directly, or indirectly through their parents, are particularly vulnerable to mental health conditions, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), or secondary trauma from distressing experiences in their wider environment. Children who have been separated from their families are a particularly vulnerable group as well and require special consideration. Without the protection and care of their families, their voices are seldom heard when they need it the most, leaving them more at risk of hunger, disease, violence, military recruitment, exploitation and sexual assault.

Vulnerable children benefit greatly from mental health and psychosocial support, and *The Book About Me* uses creative activities to approach a child's inner life, thus providing a platform for the child to express emotions in their own way. The book can serve as the children's workbook: every page contains an activity, and during the sessions, they fill it with their memories, feelings and dreams. The book can also be used in part, with the facilitator* choosing which activities are most relevant.

This version has been adapted by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to align with the organization's approach to mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) during and after armed conflict and other violence. It is part of the ICRC's technical guidelines and overall framework of MHPSS tools that draw on the organization's vast experience in responding to diverse MHPSS needs in an ever-changing humanitarian landscape.

This is the manual for the ICRC-adapted version. It contains instructions for activities that can be used in ICRC programmes for children. The manual provides a structure, but the guidelines must be adapted to each situation, for

* This toolkit is recommended for use in groups of ten to 15 children age four to ten. Facilitators should be trained in basic psychological support.

example, the particular challenges of armed conflicts. Similarly, the impact of trauma will vary significantly according to how directly children have been affected, and the resources that are available to support them. It is therefore important to adopt an approach that is both contextually and culturally appropriate while carrying out these activities.

ACTIVITY 1: WHO AM I?

PURPOSE

To identify the child's current situation and needs and to increase motivation for future sessions

CONTENTS

Me Today

Discuss with the children when they feel the most comfortable and happy. What are they doing? Who are they with?

Discuss with the children about who they are: What is my name, how old am I, where do I come from, what do I like/don't like to do, eat, play, etc.

My Day

By illustrating their daily activities, the children and the facilitators get a picture of what the child's day looks like.

Talk about what is in each box and how they feel over the course of the day. What makes the child feel good and what might feel hard during their day?

- Wake up
- Breakfast
- On the way to school
- Morning in the classroom
- Lunch
- Afternoon in the classroom
- Breaks
- After-school recreation activities
- Home
- Activities (like football)
- Bedtime
- Night-time/sleep

Time: 40 min.

Materials: *The Book About Me*, coloured pens/pencils

ACTIVITY 2: MY FAMILY

PURPOSE

To give the child perspective on where they fit in a broader context and what offers a sense of belonging and identity

CONTENTS

Discuss with the children what important people they have in their lives. What is a family? Does a person have to be related to be considered family? Don't be afraid to ask the children questions.

The Tree of Life

Use a large sheet of paper if you want something bigger than in *The Book About Me*. Create the Tree of Life by cutting/pasting/painting on the tree to show who is in their lives. Let the branches represent different people in the child's life and the fruits represent what the child has received or learned from that person. Feel free to ask questions while creating the tree: Who is included in the tree? What does this person mean to the child? Everyone who the child wants to include in the family tree can be included, such as friends and animals.

Time: 50 min.

Materials: *The Book About Me* or a large piece of paper, crafting materials, newspapers to cut out from; feel free to prepare finished tree and fruit templates

ACTIVITY 3: FRIENDS

PURPOSE

To work with the child's network and resilience by focusing on important and significant people in the child's life

CONTENTS

Resource Flower

The children fill in the Resource Flower to make important people in the child's network visible. What supportive networks are the children a part of? Let the children draw the flower themselves, where each petal represents one person who is important to them.

Time: 40 min.

Materials: *The Book About Me* or a home-made Resource Flower, paper, coloured pens/pencils, glue and wrapping tissue

ACTIVITY 4: SELF ESTEEM

PURPOSE

To work with the child on strengthening their self-esteem and self-confidence by making their resources visible

CONTENTS

Self-Esteem Shield

The Self-Esteem Shield consists of four parts, and in each part the children should answer a question.

- What do you like about yourself?
- What are you good at?
- What do others say you are good at?
- What do you want to become better at?

Then let the children share their shield in small groups.

Time: 40 min.

Materials: *The Book About Me*, or a drawn template of a shield divided into four parts, and pens

ACTIVITY 5: FEELINGS

PURPOSE

To normalize, call attention to and put into words various emotional experiences and to increase the child's understanding of the connection between thoughts, feelings, physiology and behaviour

CONTENTS

Feelings

It is important to convey that all feelings are necessary and that they help us understand our surroundings. What is an emotion, where does the child feel it, how does it feel? Proceed based on the basic feelings that are commonly experienced and do exercises around them. What makes the child happy/scared/angry/sad?

Body Map of Feelings

Use pre-prepared body templates or have the children trace each other's bodies on large sheets of paper if you want to have a larger format than the Body Map of Feelings in *The Book About Me*. Then let the children paint or write out feelings on the body drawing. For example, where on the body do you feel it when you're sad? Feel free to do an exercise on feelings beforehand so that the children have a set of feelings they can draw from. It's important to let the feelings be the focus and not the shape of the body.

Time: 15–30 min.

Materials: *The Book About Me* or large paper and coloured pens

ACTIVITY 6: MEMORIES

PURPOSE

To create space for and develop an open approach to the child's experiences. To learn that our feelings are neither good nor bad, but rather a function of our experiences

CONTENTS

Discussions and exercises about what memories are and how we can deal with them. We have all good and painful memories; how do they feel afterwards? How are our memories affecting our behaviour and how can we cope with painful memories? Let the children share suggestions and experiences.

A Good Memory/A Difficult Memory

Let the children paint, draw or write a good memory and a difficult memory.

Time: 30–40 min.

Materials: *The Book About Me* and coloured pens

ACTIVITY 7: MY FUTURE

PURPOSE

To give the child perspective on where they fit in a broader context and what offers a sense of belonging and identity. What does the child want to have achieved? What are their wishes for tomorrow and further in the future?

CONTENTS

Letter to My Future Self

The children should write a letter to themselves in the future. It can be about a memory, about the dreams or goals they have, or who they are in the future.

Time: 30 min.

Materials: *The Book About Me* and pens

Doodle Board

The other children in the group can leave personal messages for the child here.



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