STRENGTHS-BASED MENTORSHIP
HANDBOOK

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PREFACE

In a world where young people face a multitude of challenges and opportunities, it is crucial to provide support and guidance that empowers them to harness their strengths and realize their full potential. This toolkit, dedicated to the principles of strengths-based mentorship, represents a significant step towards fostering positive and impactful peer-to-peer mentorship within the Global Platform Network. This toolkit is based on War Child's long standing experience with strengths based mentorship and Global Platform Network's peer to peer methodologies.

Our unwavering belief in the potential of young people as drivers of change fuels our commitment to this project. We understand that the transition to adulthood is a critical period, and it is during this phase that young people can greatly benefit from a mentorship approach that celebrates their unique strengths and capabilities.

This toolkit is created on principles of strengths-based mentorship. It empowers young mentors and mentees to work with and build upon their inherent strengths. At the heart of this initiative lies the unique focus on peer-to-peer mentorship. By empowering young individuals to mentor their peers, we aim to challenge known and unknown power dynamics within mentor-mentee relationships. We shift from "power over" to "power with," emphasizing collaboration, shared learning, and the recognition of existing strengths. This approach highlights the importance of working together and sharing experiences to create a nurturing and supportive relationship.

Our journey in developing this toolkit has been deeply enriched by our partnership approach and commitment to the well-being of young people. Our extensive experience in supporting youth in challenging environments align seamlessly with our collective goals. Together, we aspire to make a significant impact on the lives of young individuals seeking mentorship and personal growth.

As we present this toolkit, we acknowledge the dedication and hard work of the Global Platform Network Secretariat's Methodological Unit and War Child especially Anjana Luitel, Thematic Lead, Action Aid Denmark, Global Platforms Secretariat, Changu Chibesa, Learning and Impact Specialist, Global Platforms Secretariat, Elena Butti, War Child, Ranjani. It has been our privilege to bring this project to fruition. We invite all stakeholders to take full ownership of this content, making it a dynamic and adaptable resource for youth mentorship.

We look forward to witnessing the positive transformations that will emerge from the application of this toolkit.

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INTRODUCTION TO STRENGTHS-BASED MENTORSHIP

WHAT IS MENTORSHIP?

Mentorship refers to a developmental dialogue between two people, carried out in a context of understanding and trust. Although the specific aim will depend on the mentorship scheme, the general objective of mentorship is to build the self-confidence of the mentee and help him/her advance in their own, self-determined goals, be them professional, personal or community-related. While mentorship is supposed to primarily serve the mentee, both mentors and mentees will learn something from the process. Mentors can be people at a more advanced stage of career or personal journey, but can also be peers (in which case we talk about 'peer-to-peer mentorship') or even more junior (in which case we talk about 'reverse mentorship'). Anybody at any stage of their life can benefit from mentorship, whether it is a learning journey with someone with substantially more experience or having access to a peer who acts as a soundboard.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MENTORSHIP AND COACHING?

Mentorship differs from coaching in that it is a longer, volunteer-based relationship (done by the mentor for free and not in exchange of a fee). Differently from coaches, who usually have a qualification to assist their clients, mentors perform their role in a volunteer fashion and they will also expect to gain something from the mentorship relationship. While coaches provide professional guidance to their clients to help them reach specific goals, mentors instead share their time, wisdom and experience to help their mentees develop and grow.

WHAT IS STRENGTHS-BASED MENTORSHIP?

Strengths-based mentorship is a particular approach to mentorship that invites mentors to focus on the abilities and strengths already present within mentees and their contexts, and to build on those – as opposed to focusing on problems and challenges that the mentee may face, and on the areas where they are stuck. Strengths-based mentorship is different from traditional mentorship insofar as it does not center the dialogue on the challenges that the mentee is facing, but rather on the strengths and opportunities that s/he has within and around them. While strengths-based mentorship does acknowledge the existence of problems, it does not focus on them – thereby providing the space for a more constructive and empowering dialogue experience.

Strengths-based mentorship is the integration of the strengths-based approach within mentorship. The strengths-based approach is an approach to care that focuses on people's strengths. While it has been widely conceptualized and piloted in national care systems – see SCIE, the Social Care Institute of Excellence, from which many of the principles that we use in this manual and training packages are borrowed – its uptake in the humanitarian and development sectors is still limited. This approach has the potential to revolutionize our way of working with young people in humanitarian settings and be transformational. Young people who experience and deal with violence are extremely skilful and resilient, by virtue of

the fact that they face high levels of adversity and yet cope with it and build meaningful lives. Yet too often, this resilience is disregarded and forgotten by approaches that are too focussed on 'fixing the problem' and 'finding the solution'. Working in a strengths-based way means taking the opposite approach, asking 'what is working' rather than 'what is not working', in order to further build on it.

In some contexts and/or among some target groups, the understanding and appreciation of existing strengths can be quite low. These are the contexts where applying the strengths-based approach can be most challenging but also generate the most significant shift. In such situations, it is all the more important that we facilitate people shift away from a vulnerability or a challenge-focused mindset to recognize existing strengths – because seeing existing strengths can be the key to look at a whole situation in a different way. Everybody has strengths even if they may not be so aware of them. These can be personal, as knowledge, experiences or characteristics. The strengths can also be connected to a person, for example friends, family or other people the person has in his or her network. Additionally, there are other resources in the community that the person has access to that can be considered as resources: schools, networks, associations, sport clubs and so on; which means that we can capitalize on collective as well as individual strengths and assets. Many people are not aware of what strengths and resources they have and are surrounded by, and may benefit from guidance and support to identify them. By using the strengths-based approach in mentorship, mentors can guide the youth to identify the strengths and resources the youth have, which they can use to achieve their goals. You can find more examples and information on the strengths-based approach in the mentors' training package and on the SCIE website.

What Is peer to peer strength based mentorship?
- Young people as resourceful
- Peer can also be mentors- not necessariyl they need to have experience and expertise but can provide support or link to other young people
- Peer to peer learning- link to the learning principles

PROGRAMME BACKGROUND, OBJECTIVES AND PHASES

BACKGROUND

Strengths-based mentorship was first used as an approach in the mentorship programme 'Together', developed in 2017 as a collaboration between War Child Sweden and the logistics company Scania. Volunteers from the company were trained as mentors, including training in how to engage in strengths-based dialogue, and then supported the integration of young migrants in the Swedish society and labour force. In our 2019 evaluation War Child Sweden has noted the growth of the youth involved in mentorship, both from a personal and a professional point of view. At the end of the programme 12 of the 17 youth enrolled in this pilot programme obtained summer jobs at Scania (while this was not a requirement of the programme, it shows the empowerment that young people got out of it).

Since then, the programme was underwent different editions and was adapted to different contexts – from an online version in which young conflict-affected leaders around the world were mentored by senior humanitarian/development sector practitioners (Youth Compact Champions programme 2020), to a peer-to-peer online edition where these young leaders mentored each other (Youth Compact Champions programme 2021). These editions in different contexts have allowed the War Child team to gather feedback and assess the programme's adaptability to different contexts, formats and objectives. This manual is the result of this evidence-gathering and adjustments.

WHEN IS IT APPROPRIATE TO USE STRENGTHS-BASED MENTORSHIP?

The strengths-based mentorship programme is highly flexible and can be used in a variety of different contexts and to serve different aims. It is useful in any occasion in which project participants would benefit from one-to-one, personalized support from either a senior or a peer, in order to reach their own goals.

Strengths-based mentorship can be organized as a stand-alone programme, or it can be combined with other programme components. For example, it is an excellent approach to use in support of employability schemes (with company members acting as mentors), as well as support to young leaders and activists (with more senior activists acting as mentors), or as an exit strategy to a youth hub programme (in the form of peer-to-peer mentorship).

There are of course certain target groups for whom mentorship may not be the right approach. For example, young people who do not have their basic needs met (e.g. youth in the wake of a humanitarian emergency) or young people who are under great conditions of stress and pressure (e.g. youth whose refugee status will elapse in a few months) will likely not have the sufficient time, peace of mind and focus to engage in a self-development programme such as mentorship, and will likely be more responsive, at least in the immediate moment, to more concrete and practical programming that brings immediate improvements to their situation. This is why it is very important to understand the planned target group of mentees before initiating a mentorship program. As a general guideline, mentorship should not be used with groups of young people who do not have step 1 or 2 of their needs pyramid met, while it is good to work on steps 3, 4 and 5 (see Masslov pyramid visual).

Masslov pyramid visual

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF STRENGTHS-BASED MENTORSHIP

Youth face a number of challenges in the transition to adulthood. As both the brain and the body go through many changes, young people across contexts will often benefit from additional support to take decisions, work towards their objectives and chart their path in life. The overall aim of a strengths-based mentorship programme is to help young people realize their personal and/or professional goals through personalized support provided by a volunteer mentor trained to work with and build upon the young person's strengths. The mentor provides support, advice and guidance in personal and/or professional development. Mentors will help and encourage their mentees to assess their own personal and professional situation, including both needs and strengths, and to plan the development of skills, competences and behaviours that will support them to advance in the professional and/or personal realm. The objective of mentorship is to broaden the mentees horizons through knowledge, experience and insights. The mentor supports the mentee by nuancing much of what the mentee already knows or believes, and by providing alternative perspectives.

Here are four objectives that will apply to any mentorship programme, and according to which indicators and M&E tools should be designed:

1. By the end of the programme, mentees report they have made progress against their pre-set personal and/or professional goals
2. By the end of the programme, mentees report they have learned to recognize and build upon the existing strengths within themselves and their context
3. By the end of the programme, mentors report that they have developed their own skills and confidence as a mentor, including working with the strengths-based approach
4. By the end of the programme, both mentors and mentees report that they have developed new perspectives, learning and understanding as a result of the interaction

While these are the general objectives of mentorship, for a mentorship programme to be effective it will be very important to set more specific objectives, that are demand-driven

and respond to the concrete concerns of the mentees' target group. For example, for a group of young migrants in Sweden, concerns will likely be linked to integration in their host society and access to education and employment – hence, the mentors and the mentorship focus will have to be tailored to these concerns. On the other hand, young activists around the world may look more to expand their networks, get inspiration and get practical advice on their activism work. Equally, the mentorship focus and the selected mentors should be tailored to these ambitions.

PROGRAMME PHASES

Here is a sample timeline of a strengths-based mentorship programme, including its core seven phases. Each of these phases has a dedicated section in this handbook. The timeline should be adapted based on each programme's specific aims and situation.

PHASE 1 - Planning and Preparation (1 month): Before starting the project, ensure enough time is set aside to conduct an analysis of the local context and the mentees' target group, their needs and strengths.

PHASE 2 - Staff onboarding (1 month): Strengths-based mentorship will require one or more dedicated staff member(s) depending on the programme scale. Ensure enough time is set aside to recruit and onboard this person. Allow time for the person to familiarize themselves with this toolkit, as well as the context and mentees' target group.

PHASE 3 - Recruitment of Mentors and Mentees (1 month): Strengths-based mentorship should be an inclusive programme with careful consideration given to how you will identify young people and mentors to take part. The recruitment process will entail an advertisement of the opportunity, a survey and an interview.

PHASE 4 - Mentors' training and mentees' info session (2 weeks): The first part of the programme will involve a training to be delivered to the mentors, to make sure that the mentors learn the basics of mentorship and know how to use the strengths-based approach and apply it in the dialogue with their mentees. This phase also includes an info session with the mentees, to make sure that everyone is on the same page.

PHASE 5 - Group activities and matching (2-4 weeks): If the programme is delivered in person (not online), it is advisable to design a series of group activities in which mentors and mentees get to know each other in a fun and interactive way. This can precede the matching process.

PHASE 6 - The mentorship relationship (4-8 months): This phase is dedicated to the unfolding of the mentorship relationship between mentors and mentees, with one or more check-in sessions held with both groups separately, held by the programme coordinator.

PHASE 7 - Evaluation and Project Close-Down (1 month): Towards the end of the programme, participants should be involved in an interactive evaluation in which they are invited to reflect on and evaluate their learnings and the impacts that the programme had on their lives.

PHASE 1
PLANNING AND PREPARATION

GETTING AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE LOCAL CONTEXT AND MENTEES' GROUP

As previously mentioned, it is crucial that the programme manager gains a thorough understanding of the context as well as the characteristics and specificities of the mentees' target group. To this end, it is highly recommended to conduct a full needs and strengths assessment with the population group of youth whom the mentorship programme intends to target, in order to learn more about their situation, their needs and strengths, and assess whether mentorship can be an appropriate approach for them. This assessment should take place prior to starting the programme and before the selection of mentees. Remember that it is crucial, in line with the strengths-based approach, to focus the assessment on needs as well as on strengths. You can check this needs and strengths assessment, with questions divided by area of focus – but feel free to adapt the assessment based on the local situation.

ENSURING INCLUSIVITY

When designing the programme, it is important to ensure inclusivity in different ways, with regards to gender, race, ethnicity, disabilities and sexuality. Consider what meeting spaces and activities foreseen in the program (e.g. in the group parts, in the communication component, etc.) with inclusivity in mind. Ensure appropriate support is provided to those who need it in order to allow them to participate fully in the programme.

Not only is it important to consider inclusivity on the core topics mentioned above, but also in relation to other areas like hobbies, passions and subcultures. When planning activities, consider carefully the target group of mentees and what they like doing. For example, if the mentees demonstrate a general propensity for football, a football match would be an ideal bonding activity. If there is a general interest in music, a music workshop can be an option.

GROUP SIZE

In terms of group size, the dynamics of a small versus large group are of course different, posing both advantages and disadvantages. For the project itself it is advisable to have a ratio of 1 Programme Manager to up to 20 mentees (a smaller group is advisable to ensure more personalized support, but this depends on the programme budget). This to ensure that the mentors and mentees can access full and in-depth support by the Programme Manager. For group activities, the group size will of course change the dynamics. A smaller group will be more intimate, and provide context for deeper relationships between the participants, while a larger group is likely to provide a lighter and more fun atmosphere.

ONE-TO-ONE VS SMALL GROUP MENTORS?

In the preparation phase, you should consider whether one-to-one (one mentor for each mentee) or small group mentorship (one mentor for 2-4 mentees, meeting in small groups) would be more appropriate. It is important to assess this from the start as it will influence the number of mentors you recruit. There are pros and cons of both options:

• One-to-one is more suitable for very motivated youth and mentors. It works best in programmes that have quite specific objectives, for example supporting the youth in finding employment. For mentors it usually feels like a bigger commitment, and for youth it feels like they are receiving more attention – but it can also feel more intimidating.
• Group mentorship is appropriate when the youth have a bit further way to go to become independent. It is the way to go for more vulnerable or 'at-risk youth, who would not feel at ease or comfortable alone with a mentor, and who can benefit from each other's presence and advice. It can also be good for first-timers (both mentors and mentees) who are just approaching the idea of mentorship and want to give it a try in a more relaxed setting.

SAFEGUARDING CONSIDERATIONS

If the mentees are under 18 years old, child safeguarding must be a core part of the programme and strictly follow the organization's policies. Normally, each organization working with children will have a Child Safeguarding Advisor, as well as an internal Child Safeguarding Policy, a Code of Conduct, reporting mechanisms and a Child Safeguarding training. Make sure to link with this person early in the programme design, and to integrate their recommendations throughout the programme implementation, as mentorship does, by nature of the personal relationship developed between mentors and mentees, pose a series of potential safeguarding risks. Having a child safeguarding policy in place should be a requirement for the programme to start. Moreover, depending on the local legislation, mentors may be required to submit a specific extract from the police register.

Even if working solely with older youth who are legally adults, safeguarding must be an integral part of the approach. Mentorship relationships can involve particular power dynamics, and it is paramount that the safety and wellbeing of both mentors and mentees are guaranteed. Elements of the Code of Conduct that both mentors and mentees should be required to sign up should, at the very least, include the following principles:

Mentors and mentees should never:
• Hit, strike, or (sexually) abuse another programme participant;
• Engage sexually or romantically with another programme participant who has a different role (mentor-mentee), even if this is consensual;
• Enter into inappropriate, hurtful or harassing relationships or communication with another programme participant;
• Act in a manner that places another programme participant at risk;
• Engage in physical contact with a mentee which is not a part of an activity and/or without the presence of other adults.

Most organizations will include communications guidelines (e.g. on the use of chats and social media and regulating 1-to-1 communication, especially with minors) in their Safeguarding Policy and/or Code of Conduct. Check these carefully and adhere to these at all times.

CONSIDER POSSIBLE RISKS AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

It is important to consider from the start the possible risks posed by the programme and to put in place appropriate mitigation strategies. Below is a table mentioning a few common risks – make sure you chart your own, suited to the local context, when designing the programme.

Risk	Likelihood	Mitigation strategy
The mentor and the mentee do not click	High	The programme manager should conduct continuous feedback and check-ins with the mentees and the mentors. It is important to pinpoint what exactly the issue is and to try and find solutions to the clashes in a collaborative way together with mentors and mentees.
Mentees do not understand the programme concept, setup, and/or the online tools used	Medium	The programme manager should start off with a session focusing on the set-up and the objectives of the program, and make sure that the terms of the programme are well-understood by all those involved. This should be followed by check-in sessions to ensure that everything is still running smoothly.
Low attendance/ high dropout rate	High	This can be mitigated by establishing relationships with the youth before the program starts by focusing on team and relationship building, so that the youth feel a sense of belonging to the programme.
The mentors are not engaged enough	Medium	This can be mitigated by ensuring voluntary participation of mentors (rather than, for example, being required by employers). If a mentor after discussion continues to not be engaged, then the mentor should be substituted.
Harassment (sexual or otherwise)	Low	This can be mitigated by up front, full information to all participants that the program is a safe environment in which harassment is not tolerated. Child safeguarding principles should be explained and reiterated. Clear reporting paths should be established to report harassment, and should be followed-up on in a timely manner. Programme managers should take accusations of harassment seriously and always follow the procedures of their organizations, including immediately ending the relationship between the victim and the potential harasser.

PHASE 2
STAFF RECRUITMENT AND ONBOARDING

RESOURCING AND BUDGETING

The primary cost of a successful mentorship program is the cost of a Program Manager who will take responsibility for the day-to-day running and operation, whether or not they were responsible for its initial design and implementation. The Program Manager is a necessary function in ensuring that the Mentorship is productive and safe for all parties. The programme manager needs to be hired for the whole duration of the programme (Phase 1 to 7), including initial preparation as well as final evaluation. This usually means between 9 and 13 months of contract, depending on the duration of the mentorship relationship and other factors.

Depending on the size of the programme, it is an advantage to have at least 2 Program Managers, in the event of illness, and to offer two different people with whom to connect. The larger the group of Mentees and Mentors, the more qualified staff are necessary. With one programme managers, 15 to 20 Mentees with individual mentors are manageable.

Additional programme costs include overheads, communication, materials for group activities, staff travel, youth travel for group activities, rent spaces for group activities, and refreshments for group activities. The budget for this can be fairly modest; we have tried to keep costs low by selecting local, nature-based activities such as hikes, beach days and museum visits, all of which provide bonding opportunities to chat in a relaxed setting. Refreshments are of course alcohol free. We also try to incorporate other social responsibility aspects such as serving vegetarian food only to be able to be as inclusive as possible. In summary, the budget for group activities can easily get out of control, but by keeping activities simple, outdoors, and refreshments simple, the activities become quite cost effective. You can take a look at this sample budget, which should be adapted and amended to your local context.

PROFILE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PROGRAMME MANAGER

The programme management staff should have some previous experience with mentorship as a concept, and possess extensive knowledge of the target group of mentees and of the context where they live, in order to understand their needs and strengths. If the needs and strengths assessment has been conducted before the programme manager came onboard (as is sometimes necessary due to funding cycles and programme design stages), then time should be allocated for the programme manager to familiarize themselves with the findings and to possibly conduct additional interviews and explorations. Understanding the strengths of the target group is vital to adapt the trainings package so that it addresses both these needs, and more importantly, the strengths of mentees. The programme manager should also be an experienced facilitator, so as to be able to self-guide themselves through the implementation of this programme by means of familiarizing themselves with this manual and the additional resources and templates attached to it. If the selected programme manager lacks extensive facilitation experience, then they should be trained in this methodology by an experienced staff member.

The programme manager is primarily responsible for:
- Getting familiar with the target group of mentees
- Setting up of the programme
- Training the mentors
- Giving info session for the mentees
- Designing and conducting the group activities
- Matching participants
- Support the mentoring relationships once they are established through regular check-ins
- Handle difficulties between pairs should they arise.
- Handle safeguarding cases, in collaboration with safeguarding advisor
- Rematch and refocus relationships when required
- Carry out continuous monitoring throughout the programme, and ensure that appropriate evaluation is completed (possibly through an external evaluator) at the end of the programme
- Communicate and publicize the programme results
- Take note of feedback and incorporate it in the next programme editions

You can take a look at this Programme Manager Job Description as an example to draft your own.

PHASE 3
RECRUITMENT OF MENTORS AND MENTEES

HOW TO SELECT MENTORS?

A mentorship program could be organized in several ways with mentors from different sectors depending on the mentees' situation and on the objectives of the programme. Below are some examples of where the opportunity could be advertised and promoted for mentors:

- **Companies** – appropriate if the aim of the mentorship programme is to facilitate youth transition to the labour market. In many employment markets, building a network is key to entering the employment market, and a company employed mentor can provide such a network, recommendations and tips. Think about targeting specific sectors that may be appropriate for the interests of the youth, as mentors can also contribute to the concrete skills development of the youth (and/or this can be one of the activities organized);
- **Civil society and activist networks** – appropriate if the aim of the mentorship programme is to facilitate youth engagement in the civic space. You can launch a call in the sector and recruit civil society actors from different organizations. Be particularly mindful of safety considerations, as in many local contexts, activism is a risky business;
- **Humanitarian, NGO and inter-agency networks** – appropriate if the aim of the mentorship programme is to facilitate careers in this sector. Mentors can provide tips, networks, and inspiration. This type of mentorship works particularly well in the digital space, as mentors and mentees are more likely to be in different areas of the world;
- **Universities and academic networks** – appropriate if you are looking for mentors with a specific subject-matter expertise, for example mentors expert on peacebuilding, on economics, etc.;
- **Community-based networks** – appropriate if the aim of the mentorship programme is to facilitate youth engagement in the particular community where they live. In this case, be mindful of local power dynamics, which can sometimes be complex and which mentorship can risk exacerbating;
- **Peers** – appropriate if the aim of the mentorship programme is to facilitate peer learning and support in a safe and youth-friendly environment. Also if you aim to build a young people's network and when staff might not have the resources to support each indvidual

You can find here a sample and amendable advertisement flyer to advertise the opportunity around these networks. In the selection of mentors, it is recommended that the programme manager sets up a procedure to follow, including a number of criteria for the mentors, an (online) application and an interview process.

When designing the selection strategy for the mentors, it is important to keep in mind what are the characteristics that make up a good mentor. **A good mentor is...**
- **Clear** – Straightforward in communication and in setting boundaries, while always being careful not to offend your mentee;
- **Curious** – Shows their interest to learn more about the mentees and asks open rather than closed (yes/no) questions;
- **Open** – Is open to change as a result of learning about another person's life, and is ready to share some of their own experience;
- **Reliable** – Sticks to what is promised and is present and punctual I all agreed meetings,
- **Empathetic** – Is willing to listen to the youth with an open heart, but also accept that some situations do not have a good solution. Sometimes all one can do is listen, and this is already a lot;
- **A good listener** – listens with an open, non-interrupting, present attitude;

- **Non-judgemental** – Recognises the mentee's thoughts and feelings and respects them without judging them;
- **Intrinsically motivated** – does this on a voluntary basis, not because s/he is required by someone else (e.g. an employer).

Mentors will be trained on these aspects during the mentorship training, but it is important to pay attention to these characteristics during the selection process (especially during the interview) in order to select individuals that are already naturally inclined to adopt these approaches in their interactions with others. To test these aspects, programme managers can consider designing 'scenarios' to present the prospective mentor with during the interview, and asking them how they would react. Then, reflect together with them on what would be the most appropriate reaction based on the abovementioned characteristics, and assess together whether they have the right approach to become a mentor.

In addition to the abovementioned personality traits, programme coordinators may want to consider an additional set of more 'objective' criteria in selecting their mentors. For example, age, experience working with youth, language skills, and gender can be important considerations to take into account, depending on the aim of the programme and interest of the mentees. For instance, War Child Sweden is launching a new programme specifically aimed at young women. The young women expressed an interest in meeting more female role models, and some have certain gender-related trauma. Therefore, in this case, recruiting female mentors will be more appropriate.

For process on how to select mentors, it is recommended to run an online survey (through a survey platform such as Survey Monkey) to screen for the more 'objective' criteria, followed by an interview with the shortlisted candidates to assess the more 'subjective' personality traits and motivation. However, make sure that the application process is inclusive for your context. For example, if recruiting in a context with little access to internet, think of a different recruitment methodology for the first step (e.g. a paper questionnaire).

The following are examples of questions to ask in the online survey and/or in the interview:
- Gender, age, profession, other relevant demographic data
- Why do you want to be part of the programme?
- What are you willing to give as a mentor?
- Why would you be a good mentor?
- What do you expect to get back as a mentor?
- What do you expect from your mentee?
- What is your professional background?
- What are your interests and passion?
- What languages do you speak?

HOW TO SELECT MENTEES?

Depending on the desired target group and aim of the programme, partnering up with schools, youth hubs, youth associations as well as sports clubs, but also more informal spaces like street corners and hang-out spaces, may be possible ways to find mentees. There is often a "snowball effect": when getting in contact with some potential mentees, these mentees tell their friends and acquaintances, often from the same population group, about the programme.
Think carefully about where and how you will advertise and promote the opportunity to engage in the programme. Advertising very widely might produce more interest than can be handled and create the possibility for community tension, while advertising in a very limited way does not support the possibility for inclusion and selecting mentees based on a genuine motivation. A targeted promotion to a carefully selected target group will most likely work best. Consider your programme aims, as well as existing networks your offices and staff have and how to communicate the opportunity so a mix of people within the desired population group can hear about it.

Below are some examples of where the opportunity could be advertised and promoted for mentees, depending on the desired target group and aims of the programme:
- Local schools;
- Local social services;
- Refugee centres or shelters;
- Local youth-led organizations;
- Youth hubs;
- Online youth communities or networks;
- Places in the community where young people gather, e.g. street corners, hang-out places, sports field (think about these in a gender-sensitive way);
- Other NGOs working with youth in the targeted areas;
- Child protection networks;
- Places and organizations where young people work;
- Centres where young people with disabilities live.

Age is an important consideration to take into account. While the specific age limit will depend on the local context and project aim, mentorship usually works best with young people who are 15 years old or older. Late adolescence is a period when goals, hopes and dreams are beginning to take form and young people start asking themselves questions. Guidance from a mentor can be helpful. In addition, this is an age where school and social services tend to 'lose track' of young people, many of whom tend to disengage from mainstream institutions. This is where informal programmes, possibly advertised through and based at more youth-friendly spaces such as youth hubs, can play a key support role for young people for whom mainstream societal institutions have failed.

When selecting mentees, it is possible to set up a similar process to the recruitment of mentors (through an online survey first, and an in-depth interview later) or to go directly to the interview stage to remove a hurdle for mentees to participate. It is very important to understand the specific needs, strengths, and expectation of each mentee in order to match each mentee with an appropriate mentor. Ideally, all mentees who express a motivation to participate in the programme, and that meet the formal selection criteria (e.g. age, gender, etc.) should be included. Selecting mentees based on other grounds can create feelings of exclusion in those who are not selected, which could violate the do-no-harm principle.

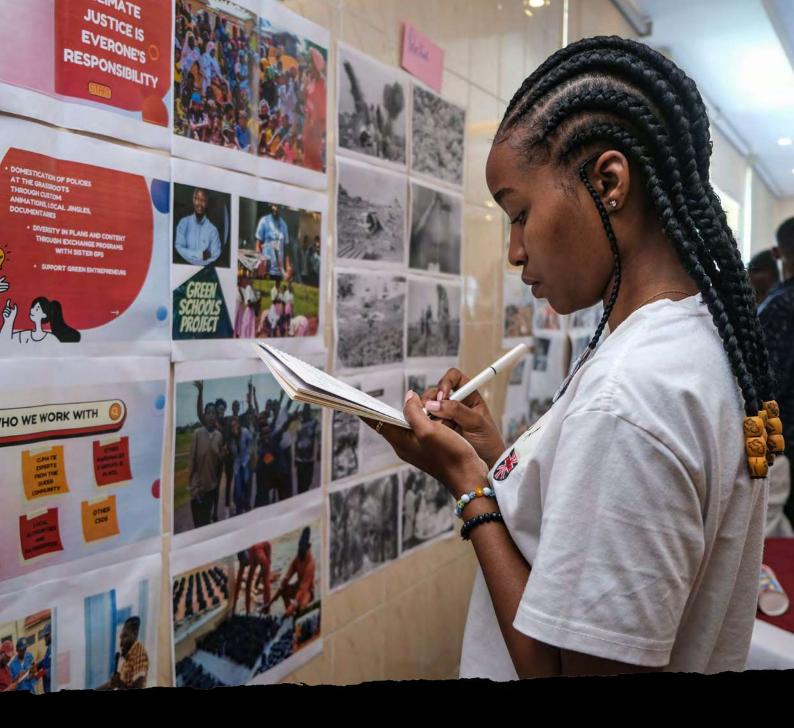Sample interview questions for mentees can include:
- What is your motivation for joining this programme?
- Are you committed to joining the whole programme?
- Are there any barriers to your participation, and how can these be mitigated?
- What are the goal(s) you would like to work on through mentorship?
- What are your interests and hobbies?
- In what language(s) would you be most comfortable to be mentored?

PARTNERING WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS

If you are partnering with one or more specific institutions for the recruitment of mentors or mentees (e.g. if you're partnering with a company, a school or a university), make sure to establish the respective roles and responsibilities and you establish focal points in all organizations involved (e.g. through drafting a Memorandum of Understanding). Especially when collaborating with a business actor, it is a good practice to establish a framework agreement. Our experience says that business tend to see mentorship engagements as a component of their CSR (corporate social responsibility) work. In this sense, it is important to ensure that mentors decide to join the programme because of a genuine interest, and not because they are obliged or pushed into it by a company policy, as this is likely to lead to a lack of engagement by the mentor. This should be clearly outlined in the framework agreement. Especially when working with partners, it is advisable to make use of digital project management tools such as Microsoft Teams in order to organise the mentorship.

INFORMED CONSENT

Before starting, having every mentor and mentee consent is crucial. Such consent not only fulfils legal privacy requirements such as GDPR but adds a level of comfort to both mentors and mentees. Practically, using standardized forms for informed consent, applying to both photos and video recordings during the mentoring sessions and to the general participation in the program, is the easiest way forward. For mentors, informed consent can be integrated in a Volunteer Agreement (see a sample here) which they will be required to sign after the first training.

PHASE 4
MENTORS' TRAINING AND MENTEES' INFO SESSION

MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

Already during recruitment, ensure that expectations of both the mentors and the mentees are clear. During the interview process, take the time to check in with everyone involved if the expectations, the goal and the purpose of the programme/project is clear to everyone. For example, is the mentorship programme is focussed solely on helping young people advance on their professional path, but does not involve job creation itself, young people should not expect to get out of the programme with a job (even though this can be a possible, spill over outcome and added benefit, the programme is not designed with this in mind; therefore, a job is not guaranteed, and this should be clear to the young people). Another key aspect of managing expectations is to establish an approximate timeline for the project, which can be an adapted version of the Programme Phases section above. Be as clear as possible about the timeline, the time commitments and the schedule. This has an important impact on the commitment of both mentors and mentees. The importance of clear expectations on matters such as this cannot be stressed enough, to avoid disappointment.

In this sense, all participants (mentors and mentees, in separate groups) should be aware of the basic information, which at a minimum should encompass:
- The purpose of the mentorship program; what it will and it will not do;
- The basics of the relationship between the mentor and mentee;
- Roles and responsibilities of mentor and mentee;
- Agreed expectations and boundaries;
- A clear timeline for the project;
- An understanding of the life cycle of the mentorship relationship and an acceptance that it will inevitably come to an end.

This information is included in the mentors' training and in the mentees' info session, respectively.

MENTORS TRAINING

Mentors need to be trained to be effective mentors and use the strengths-based approach.

The strengths-based mentorship approach is unique because it trains mentors in engaging in a truly empowering dialogue with their mentees built around strengths. To this end, we have designed this mentors' training package that takes approximately 3 hours. We recommend delivering the training in two sessions of 1.5 hours over two consecutive weeks (with 1 week of pause between the first and the second session). The training can be delivered online or in-person and can be amended as needed to suit the specific programme purposes. The training is designed to be easily delivered by a programme manager and expert facilitator, without the necessity of a training of trainers. The key topics covered in the training are the following:

Part 1
- Introduction to the programme & mentors' commitment
- Basics of good mentorship
- The Strengths-Based Approach to mentorship (incl. a try-out exercise)
- Accessing support as a mentor

Part 2
- Setting up the mentorship relationship
- Effective listening and constructive dialogue
- The four phases of the relationship
- Safeguarding and integrity

MENTEES INFO SESSION

During about the same time as the mentors' training, it is recommended to run a mentees info session (see a sample version here). This session contains key information about the programme, managing expectations, and safeguarding, and includes an opportunity for the mentees to ask questions. The info session can be delivered both in person and online, and is designed to be easily delivered by a programme manager and expert facilitator, without the need for a training of trainers. In addition to clarifying programme aims and managing expectations, in this session it will be very important for the programme coordinator to start establishing a bond with the mentees, so that they feel they have a safe space and someone they can turn to in case of difficulties (even though also more formalized and anonymous safeguarding and reporting channels should be established).

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Save some time at the end of the training and info sessions to address administrative matters such as signing Informed Consent forms, establishing communication channels etc.

PHASE 5
GROUP ACTIVITIES AND MATCHING

GROUP ACTIVITIES

The first step in establishing the relationship between Mentors and Mentees is getting to know each other. Running some group activities at the start of the programme (especially if the programme is carried out in person) is an excellent way to unite the group and create a relaxed atmosphere for mentors and mentees to get to know each other. It is important for these activities to remain cost-effective and local – examples can be, depending on the context, indoor games (e.g. puzzles or board games), nature hikes, doing music or sports together, or any group activities linked to the specific objective of the mentorship programme (for example, if the programme is focussed on employability, a bonding activity can be a workshop on CV writing and interviews; whereas if the programme is focussed on activism, a bonding activity can be a joint visit to a local civil society association). In other words, anything that sparks interaction, interest and dialogue among mentors and mentees, in a context-sensitive way, is a good bonding activity. It is important that the activities are contextually sensitive and popular among the youth. Another good bonding activity can be a mapping exercise of existing strengths in a given context/community, to get all participants used to thinking with the strengths-based approach.

THE MATCHING PROCESS

The matching process is usually done by the Programme Manager based on a set of pre-established criteria (e.g. language, experience or gender identification), as well as a sense of who may fit together. If group activities are conducted in the initial programme phase, allowing self-selection for the mentoring pair is also possible. This is usually advisable, as the most successful matching occurs in relationships where both parties felt they had some choice in their partner. It is very important that if either party in a mentoring relationship is uncomfortable with the person they have been matched with, this can be rearranged without consequences by the Programme Manager, either at the beginning of the programme or even during the unfolding of the mentorship relationship.

PHASE 6
THE MENTORSHIP RELATIONSHIP

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Once all the necessary trainings and preparations have been completed, and the matching has been done, it is time for mentors and mentees to start meeting regularly and carry out the actual mentorship process. While this will change from programme to programme, it is advisable that mentors and mentees meet at least every two weeks, for at least four months, in order to make the mentorship relationship meaningful. As a general rule, the more often mentors and mentees can meet, the better – while of course avoiding inappropriate excesses like meeting multiple times a week. The programme manager should make it clear what is the minimum expected frequency of the meeting and duration of the relationship.

Mentors and mentees have the freedom to choose where and when to meet, while of course respecting due safeguarding considerations as well as common sense. Meeting in someone's home, and/or at night, should generally be avoided. Normally, an institution (e.g. a school or community centre), a café, or another public space is advisable. Meeting online is also possible.

Both the Mentors and the Mentees should actively and respectfully participate in the planning of the meetings and in the conversations themselves. They should be clear about expected times and places of meetings and if needed to reschedule, do so with enough anticipation with respect for the other party. Sticking to 1-to-1 appointments is usually one of the aspects that mentors and mentees find the hardest; here is where the Programme Manager should play an active role with continuous check-ins and making sure everything is running smoothly, or taking action (e.g. talking with those who do not respect agreements about the importance of doing so, or eventually changing mentor if necessary).

At the beginning of the relationships, mentors should guide mentees in establishing a specific, personal goal for the mentorship (see more about this in the mentors' training package). Objectives should, as much as possible, follow the SMART model (**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**mbitious, **R**ealistic, **T**ime-bound).

MORE STRUCTURE VS LESS STRUCTURE?

Mentors and mentees can choose to adopt a more formal, structured approach to their conversation or to leave it more spontaneous. This depends on each mentor's personal style but also on several considerations:

• Setting a structure can help to move the conversation forward, but it should always be room for participants to come with ideas outside of the box and to be a bit flexible;
• Less structure means less possibility for the mentorship pair to form their own program and focusing on the specific directions of the mentee, but there is a risk of going in circles or 'getting stuck'.

The conversation style should be agreed in advance and each pair should reassess their conversation style constantly to make sure it is effective. In general, a blend between the two approaches tends to work well, and even those adopting a loser and more spontaneous approach will benefit from having the following models in the back of their minds.

THE 4 STEPS MODEL

The 4 steps model is a useful frame to think about how to apply the strengths-based approach over multiple encounters. This model includes for phases

- **Engagement:** The first phase involves building trust between the mentor and mentee and to set the tone for the relationship.
- **Exploration:** The second phase involves mapping the mentees strengths and setting goals for the future.
- **Expansion:** The third phase is to connect the mentee's strengths with their goals to increase both parties' understanding of how the mentee can harness their available resources.
- **Evaluation:** In the fourth phase, the mentee is challenged to practically utilize their strengths in a productive manner through individual work.

This approach is further elaborated in the mentors' training package.

THE STAR METHOD

The STAR method is effective when addressing a specific situation that the youth is keen to talk about. It includes a series of relevant questions for each of these situations.

Situation – when the mentee wants to describe a situation:
- What happened
- Who was there
- What were the preconditions
- When did it happen, what time
- How did it feel

Task – When the mentee wants to describe a specific task to resolve:
- What is your task
- What are you expected to accomplish
- What preconditions / resources to you have to complete the task?
- Are you dependent upon others to complete your task if so, who?
- How do you feel about the task?

Action – When the mentee wants to discuss how they acted:
- What did you do and why?
- What worked well? What did not work?
- What could you have done differently?

Result – When the mentee wants to discuss their results
- Congratulations
- What did you achieve
- How does it feel?
- How are people around you reacting to this result?

This approach is further elaborated in the mentors' training package.

REGULAR CHECK-INS AND SUPPORT GROUPS

Providing consistent and regular support throughout the unfolding of the mentorship relationship is key to its success. Ideally, multiple check-ins should be organized with mentors and mentees in separate groups (and possibly, also one or two individual check-ins with each mentor and each mentee separately). This ensures continues engagement in the programme, and allows to detect challenges and possible safeguarding concerns early on. After each group check-in session, a 'top tips' sheets capturing the main take-aways from the check-ins session can be shared with the whole group (see sample here). Social group activities during the unfolding of the project can also provide a relaxed environment to bond with others and discuss how the programme is going. Finally, setting up social media group (e.g. through WhatsApp) separately for mentors and mentees can provide these with a platform to discuss successes, concerns and challenges with each other. The programme coordinator should always be the admin of these groups.

PHASING OUT OF THE MENTORSHIP RELATIONSHIP

Phasing out is a complex phase of the mentorship relationship, and one that should be approached with care. It should be clear from the start when the relationship is expected to end, and in what way the relationship will transform. A mentorship relationship should not be ended abruptly. Should the relationship end earlier than foreseen, it is important to as early notice as possible, and always end the relationship in person (if possible). When done right, ending a mentorship program can be the final step in ensuring a successful mentorship relationship. It is important to recognize and praise the mentee's progress- such encouragement will motivate more growth and action. It is important to acknowledge challenges and obstacles that the mentee faced during your time together. A recognition of the mentee's efforts will help the mentee to see themselves in a new light. It is equally important to end the mentoring relationship with a sense of purpose and direction for the future, for example by asking the question: what next? More guidance for mentors is provided on this in the mentors' training package.

As a group, the programme coordinator should strive to end with a celebration and summary/reflection together with everyone. How has the process of the project/program been to everybody? This can also be part of the final evaluation.

PHASE 7

EVALUATION AND PROJECT CLOSE-DOWN

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Informal evaluation and reflection on activities during the check-in sessions and possible 1-to-1 meetings will also be required to help ensure that the programme manager receives regular feedback on the programme functioning and can adjust accordingly. Then, when the programme draws to a close, time for a workshop should be organised to gather final evaluation and feedback, using a variety of different tools.

The final evaluation of a strengths-based mentorship programme will need to broadly focus on the personal and/or professional development outcomes for the young people involved, as well as on the sense of satisfaction and learning of the mentors. It will be important to work with your Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Team of your organization to select the most appropriate tools among the variety of M&E tools, depending on the programme focus and objectives.

Some of the aspects to evaluate include:
- Programme and relationship processes
- Appropriateness of the selection criteria
- Proportion of successes/failures in relation to the mentee's personal goals
- Mentor and mentees satisfaction and mutual learning
- Mentor and mentee's ability to work with the strengths-based approach
- Quality of the training
- Programme support
- Meeting frequency/relevancy/value

CONCRETE TOOLS

The concrete tools that we advise using in the final evaluation are:

- **Qualitative interviews and focus groups:** Qualitative interviews and focus groups with participants will assist in properly defining the target group, the program, its goals and its limitations.
- **Survey:** Initial questions regarding expectations, goals and limitations can be easily constructed. By having the participants answer these questions at the onset and after conclusion of the program will chart the progress of the program. Combine yes/no questions with more substantial questions requiring reflection.
- **Wellbeing index:** The WHO wellbeing index is important to implement to measure the wellbeing of the mentees prior to, during and following the program.
- **Personal goals tool M&E tool:** a tool that asks participants to reflect on their own measure of success and how much they have progressed towards their personal goals.

Be careful: some of these tools require a baseline to be collected at the beginning of the programme. This can be done through the initial bonding phase.

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