

GUIDANCE NOTE: DESIGNING PFA TRAINING MODULES IN THE EU4HEALTH PROJECT

I. Introduction

Psychological First Aid is a set of skills and attitudes for helping people in distress who need support to manage their situation and cope with immediate challenges.

The training modules introduce participants to basic helping skills needed by anyone trained in PFA. It is suitable for all Red Cross and Red Crescent staff and volunteers working in any sector. PFA for Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies has several parts that can be used separately or together. It comprises [a guide](#), [a small booklet on PFA](#), and [an Introduction](#) that is used only as induction or orientation, [a training of trainers on PFA](#), and several training modules on PFA:

Training Modules					
Module	Introduction to PFA	Basic PFA training	PFA for Children	PFA in Groups - team support	PFA for young peers
Duration	4-5 hours (induction or orientation).	8-9 hours.	8-9 hours.	21 hours.	18 hours.
Who is it for?	All Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement staff and volunteers.	Staff and volunteers with some prior knowledge and experience in providing psychosocial support.	Staff and volunteers whose work involve interaction with children and their caregivers.	Managers or others who provide care and support to staff and volunteers.	For young people between the ages of 12 and 23 years.
What is it about?	It introduces participants to basic psychological first aid skills.	It introduces basic psychological first aid skills and presents a range of situations faced by adults, their reactions to crises, and how helpers may respond appropriately.	Topics include children's reactions to stress, and communicating with children, their parents, and caregivers.	Topics include providing psychological first aid to groups of people who have experienced a distressing event together such as teams of Red Cross and Red Crescent staff and volunteers.	The training emphasizes the supportive roles young people can provide to other young people through the provision of psychological first aid skills.
Training pre-requisites	None-standalone.	None-standalone.	None-standalone.	Participants to have completed a basic PFA course.	None-standalone.

The guidance aims to promote consistency, effectiveness, and accessibility of PFA materials and trainings:

- Enables consistent and standardized training content and approaches for responders across the different National Societies.
- Ensure a quality framework to deliver effective PFA training.
- Serve as a reference document for trainers and responders to support them refresh their knowledge and skills.

II. Key Considerations for Designing PFA Training

There are several general considerations to consider when planning, designing, and facilitating a training:

- **Language and communication:** use correct terminology according to the MHPSS glossary for your local language (if such a glossary exists).
- **Contextual challenges:** consider the specific challenges and vulnerabilities present in the specific response including Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI) linked to ongoing conflict, disasters, or displacement. Address how this impacts the delivery of PFA and adapt strategies accordingly.
- **Local resources and support system:** identify and incorporate existing local resources such as MH services, community leaders, local organizations, and other important stakeholders (police, municipality, and ministries, etc.). This will allow you to develop and/or update a contextualized mapping of the services and potential links to existing referral pathways.
- **Gender and diversity:** Recognize and address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of diverse populations, including third-country nationals, gender-based violence survivors, children, older adults, and persons with disabilities. Consider these requirements in relation to your trainees.
- **Ethical considerations:** Importance of considering informed consent, confidentiality, and non-discrimination. Discuss ethical dilemmas in the training linked to the Code of Conduct, safeguarding policies, and the [IFRC integrity line](#).
- **Practical applicability:** adapt the training exercises, case studies, and role-plays to reflect your local context and challenges as well as the needs and abilities of the trainees.
- **Supervision and follow-ups:** plan follow-up meetings with participants to promote further skill development, joint problem-solving, and well-being support to PFA providers.
- **Feedback and evaluation:** Encourage trainees to provide feedback either in a group setting, to their 'buddy/peer', or anonymously. Examples: comment boxes, temperature exercises, end-of-day evaluations, check-ins, and checkouts. Usage of all feedback formats, or a combination, is recommended.

Please refer to Annex 1: table for key consideration before, during, and after training.

III. Module 1: [Introduction to PFA](#)

This half-day training module introduces participants to basic skills in psychological first aid (PFA). It is a great tool to give an orientation or an induction to PFA. It is suitable for all Red Cross and Red Crescent staff and volunteers working in any sector.

It aims to enable participants to:

- Know what psychological first aid is and what it is not.
- Understand the three action principles of 'Look, Listen, and Link.'
- Practice providing PFA to someone in distress.
- Be aware of the importance of self-care when helping others.
- This training module is one of five on psychological first aid, which accompanies a set of materials on PFA. This includes an introductory booklet called A Guide to Psychological First Aid for Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and a small booklet, A Short Introduction to Psychological First Aid for Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Recommended duration: three to four hours.

IV. Module 2: Basic PFA training

This training introduces participants to basic psychological first aid (PFA). The training is suitable for all psychosocial staff and volunteers and others providing direct care and support to people in distress. It aims to enable participants to:

- know more about reactions to distress
- know what psychological first aid is and what it is not
- understand the three action principles of 'Look, Listen and Link'
- have practiced providing PFA to someone in distress
- have considered complex reactions and situations
- be aware of the importance of self-care when helping other

Recommended duration: The activities take between eight to nine hours and can be delivered in one day or in one-and-a-half days.

V. Module 3: PFA for children training

The training has been developed for staff and volunteers providing psychosocial support to children and those providing direct care and support to children and their caregivers in distress, such as nurses, teachers, social workers, health volunteers, or ambulance workers. It aims to enable participants to:

- know children's reactions to distress
- know what psychological first aid for children is
- understand the three action principles of 'Look, Listen and Link' in relation to children
- have practiced providing PFA to a child and caregiver in distress
- have considered complex reactions and situations
- be aware of the importance of self-care

Duration: Eight to nine hours and can be conducted in one day, or in one-and-a-half days.

Key considerations for trainers when delivering PFA for children (Annex 2):

- **Safety and protection:** Ensure the physical safety and security of children during a PFA activity.
- **Age-appropriate communication:** Adapt your language to the age of the child. Talking to a 5-year-old is not the same as talking to a 16-year-old.
- **Establishing trust and rapport:** build trust and rapport with children through empathy, active listening, engagement in fun activities, and non-judgmental attitudes.
- **Supportive caregivers:** a caregiver who is feeling well is a caregiver who can calm a child in a distressing situation. You might need to support the caregiver to manage their feelings and reactions before engaging with the child.
- **Addressing specific needs:** determine the needs of the child according to their age. Pay special attention to unaccompanied and separated children, children with disabilities, children dealing with loss, and children experiencing extremely distressing situations.
- **Ensure continuity of care:** for children in need of further support. Make sure there is proper follow-up, and that the children are not left alone.
- **Assent and consent:** Children should give their assent which is their verbal agreement to any intervention or help provided. Adults should give their consent which allows the organization or a third party to take care of a child whether for help or support or participation in any activity such as educational, recreational, sports, etc.

VI. Module 4: Group PFA - Support to teams

The Group PFA: Support to Teams is an advanced training in PFA, which is why module two covering the basics of PFA is a pre-requisite for this module. During this training, participants will learn about PFA and support to teams' meetings, and practice providing support in group settings. It provides a structure and framework to facilitate the provision of PFA in group settings, such as community gatherings or volunteer team support groups, where both the facilitator and group participants can help each other (peer-to-peer learning).

Topics to cover include:

- assess if PFA support for team meetings is needed
- prepare for a PFA support to the team meeting
- run a PFA support for the team meeting
- manage time and facilitate the meeting so everyone feels included
- handle difficult reactions and disclosures
- manage group participation, dynamics, and interactions
- promote peer support
- provide PFA to individuals and support to the group at the same time
- know when and how to refer a person for additional help

Recommended Duration: three days.

VII. Module 5: Peer-to-Peer - PFA for young peers

Overview of the peer-to-peer module:

This Psychological First Aid (PFA) for Young Peers. A training manual is part of a package of materials that have been developed by the IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support (PS Centre). The materials introduce PFA to young people between 12 and 23 years old, outlining what PFA is and how it can be used to provide peer support in different contexts.

There are two components to the package:

1. PFA for Young Peers: [A handbook](#). This handbook introduces PFA to young people. It explains the key principles of Look, Listen, and Link in PFA and gives examples of how young people can use PFA to support their peers.
2. PFA for Young Peers: [A training manual](#). This manual features a two-day training with a suggested training programme and training notes, including links to other resources on PFA.

Recommended Duration: two days.

Suggestion: The training in PFA for Young Peers can be delivered on its own or be included in a broader package of training and support for young people.

VIII. Training for Trainers in Basic PFA

This Training of Trainers (ToT) module is a training accompanying Module 2 Basic PFA. The ToT module prepares trainees to conduct their trainings in the PFA manual Module 2 Basic PFA which can be delivered in one day and can be extended for up to two days. Module 2 Basic PFA uses a wide range of training methods, including presentations, active discussions, role play, and group and individual activities. This allows participants to practice interacting directly with a group when facilitating and to be able to create an active, safe, fun, and participatory learning environment by using direct human engagement and communication.

When providing PFA trainings, **facilitation skills** are vital:

- **Active listening:** engage actively with the trainees
- **Clear communication:** convey information clearly
- **Adaptability:** tailor the training to meet the diverse needs and backgrounds
- **Demonstrate PFA techniques:** able to do roles plays and practical examples
- **Encourage participation and feedback:** allows for discussions and sharing of knowledge within the timeframes of the training

Duration: three days

Adaptations of the TOT should be done according to the modules that are selected and the target audience. The TOT in basic PFA is just an example.

IX. After Training Follow-up Activities and Supervision

Given the PFA training is an interactive learning event aimed at building a set of skills, it may require ongoing support beyond the training schedule. Moreover, PFA providers should have access to a safe and supportive environment, enabling volunteers to talk openly about sources of stress and ways of coping, skills development, and space to ask for support when/if they need it. This promotes PFA providers' well-being and increases their capacity to respond to and deliver support to those who need it. Access to supportive supervision has to be planned for in terms of human resources and time for PFA trainees.

X. Conclusion

The importance of designing tailored PFA training modules cannot be overstated. By emphasizing flexibility, adaptation, and contextualization, the training programmes can effectively address the unique needs and challenges faced by volunteers and staff in different contexts and cultural settings. It is hence recommended to standardize the approach within the NS allowing for some flexibility and adaptations to meet the needs of the NS. Lessons learned from the trainings can feed the contextualization and adaptation process. There is no one-size-fits-all approach for all NSs. Tailored modules by the NSs ensure that trainees are equipped with the relevant knowledge and skills. Moreover, continuous monitoring and adaptation of training approaches are crucial to ensure methodological relevance and effectiveness for participants over time and are part of competency-development and continuous professional development for trainers. By staying responsive to emerging needs and incorporating feedback, the skills trainees learn through PFA training will help volunteers and staff to better serve the diverse populations affected by emergencies.

Annex 1: Key considerations checklist for before, during, and after a training

Key considerations checklist		Who is responsible?	Yes or No	Action required
Before the training				
1	Conduct a needs assessment to understand the context and challenges.	PM		
2	Identify the target audience and their specific needs including availability and sectoral focus (health, education, basic distribution, etc.).	PM		
3	Determine and contextualize the training objectives based on the setting and target group.	PM		
4	Develop a training plan and curriculum based on the identified needs.	Trainer		
5	Select appropriate training methodologies and materials.	Trainer		
6	Prepare training materials, including handouts, presentations, and contextualized case studies.	Trainer		
7	Ensure the availability of suitable training facilities and equipment.	PM		
8	Arrange logistics, such as scheduling, venue, and catering.	PM		
9	Recruit and train competent trainers or facilitators.	PM		
10	Promote the training programme to potential participants (at least one month in advance).	PM		
During the training				
1	Create an inclusive learning environment (group values, parking lot flip-chart, feedback mechanisms, agendas, etc.).	Trainer		
2	Begin the training with an introduction and overview of PFA principles.	Trainer		
3	Use a variety of interactive training methods (e.g., lectures, group discussions, role-plays) to engage participants.	Trainer		
4	Tailor the content and examples to the specific needs and challenges of the target group/audience.	Trainer		
5	Encourage active participation and provide opportunities for questions and discussions.	Trainer		
6	Use real-life case studies and scenarios to illustrate PFA concepts and skills.	Trainer		
7	Provide practical exercises and role plays to enhance learning and skill application.	Trainer		
8	Incorporate cultural sensitivity and respect for diversity throughout the training.	Trainer		
9	Monitor participant progress through feedback and adapt the training pace as needed.	Trainer		
10	Allow time for reflection and debriefing after challenging topics or activities.	Trainer		

After the training				
1	Gather feedback from participants through evaluation forms or surveys.	Trainer		
2	Analyze feedback and identify areas of improvements.	PM		
3	Provide participants with relevant resources and materials for further learning.	Trainer		
4	Offer ongoing support and supervision to participants as they apply PFA in their work or communities.	PM and Trainer		

Annex 2: Readiness Questionnaire for Child Focused PFA¹

The purpose of this process is to help the roll out Psychological First Aid for Children and/Psychological First Aid for Young Peers with a clear vision of how and when it will be used. The aim is to ensure a more effective competency-development and capacity-building plan.

Note to MHPSS focal person: This should take 10 minutes to fill out.

		Yes	Partly	No	Comments and action points
Section 1: What is the need?					
1	An assessment has been conducted and the specific needs and risks of boys and girls across age groups, their caregivers, and local and national resources are identified.				
2	Children and their caregivers in the targeted community have actively participated in the assessment.				
Section 2: What is the aim of the intervention?					
3	Collaboration and coordination across different child-focused services in education, child protection, health, and nutrition services are in place.				
4	PFA for children will be implemented with community members who remain with the host or refugee community for a certain period of time to ensure sustainable involvement (e.g., teachers, social workers, or health care providers).				
5	The NS has the capacity to identify, assess, and refer children in need of specialized MH services.				
6	The NS has the capacity to identify, assess, and refer children in need of protection.				



Section 3: What activities are required?					
7	Relevant authorities, community members, and groups are interested and committed to engage in PFA for children.				
8	Staff or volunteers trained in the PFA for children module have previous experience in conducting MHPSS activities and child-friendly communication skills.				
9	Supportive supervision for staff and volunteers who have completed the PFA for children is planned.				
Section 4: What resources are available?					
10	A monitoring and evaluation framework allows the follow up of the provision of PFA for children during this project and the trainings.				
11	Funds are in place to provide PFA to children (either as a standalone programme or integrated within other services).				
12	An exit strategy is in place from the beginning of the programme.				
13	All staff and volunteers are trained in the IFRC Safeguarding Policy and Child Protection Minimum Standards packages.				

Currently, the NS is working with the following age groups:

- 0 to 5 years old
- 6 to 11 years old
- 12 to 17 years old

What specific activities or services do you provide for children?

- 1:
- 2:
- 3:
- 4:
- 5: