

NORWEGIAN  
REFUGEE COUNCIL

NRC

THE NORWEGIAN REFUGEE COUNCIL'S

# BETTER LEARNING PROGRAMME







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Cover image by Tom Peyre-Costa/NRC

[www.nrc.no](http://www.nrc.no)

## **OUR VISION**

**RIGHTS RESPECTED. PEOPLE PROTECTED.**



# Over **70 years** of advocating for people forced to flee.

Established in 1946, in the aftermath of World War Two, the Norwegian Refugee Council provides emergency response and aid to those fleeing war and persecution across 35 countries.

Photo: Tom Peyre-Costa/NRC

Hamam al Halil Displacement Camp near Mosul, Iraq.  
December 2018.



# **We believe that education is a fundamental human right for all children.**

**"Children and youth are able to participate in NRC education and youth programmes, irrespective of their background, gender and abilities, and are physically and emotionally safe, so they can learn and thrive." - NRC Global Education Core Competency Strategy 2022-2025.**

## **The impact of a crisis**

Children in crisis-affected communities often witness extreme acts of violence and human suffering, sometimes leading to nightmares, flashbacks and crippling grief. Disruption of basic needs caused by displacement, such as access to education, may deprive children of normal physical, social-emotional and psychological development. Without appropriate mitigations, long-term exposure to these high levels of stress can be particularly damaging to both physical and mental health for children and young people.





Photo: Charbel Kousseifi/NRC

**Three Syrian refugee brothers practise some relaxation exercises from the Better Learning Programme (BLP) at their home in Lebanon.**



# **The Better Learning Programme (BLP).** NRC's flagship classroom-based psychosocial support intervention for children in crisis-affected communities.

## **A holistic approach**

The BLP supports children's recovery from the traumatic events experienced during conflict and displacement by improving conditions for learning. The programme mobilises a child's support network of caregivers, teachers and counsellors - encompassing a multi-layered approach to restore a sense of normality and hope.

## **Fluid and responsive**

The BLP can be implemented by any teacher or counsellor who has been trained on the approach, making it ideal for emergency and under-resourced humanitarian settings. This level of flexibility allows for quick adaptation according to differing levels of emergency and other contextual challenges.





Photo: Tom Peyre-Costa/NRC

The security crisis in the Central Sahel region has taken a heavy toll on children with 5,512 schools closed due to insecurity and 13 million children out of school. The impact on children has not only been physical or material but also psychological. To address this situation, improve learning and restore hope, NRC began implementing BLP in the region in December 2020.



# Our approach to **recovery**.

The BLP's classroom-based psychosocial support approach is based on five principles for recovery - safety, calming, connectedness, empowerment, and hope (Hobfoll et al. 2007). We introduce these five principles into three components of intervention to enhance the capacity of teachers, counsellors and caregivers to help children and youth learn practical knowledge and skills to manage their stress and improve their wellbeing.



Being able to calm down.



A sense of safety and stability.



The power to change the situation.



Connecting with others.

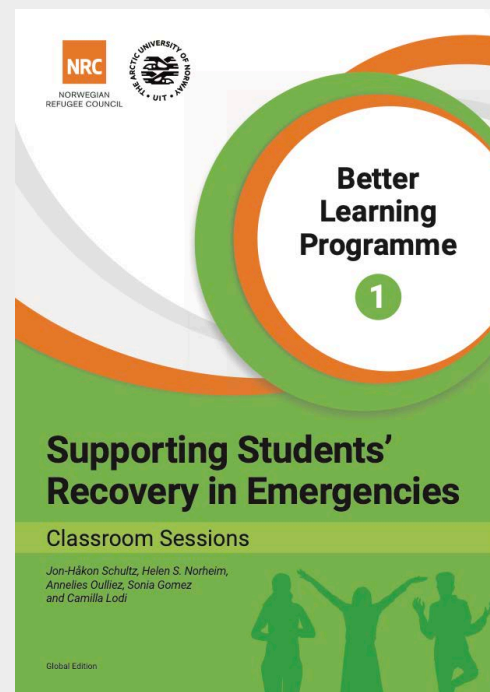


Re-establishing hope.



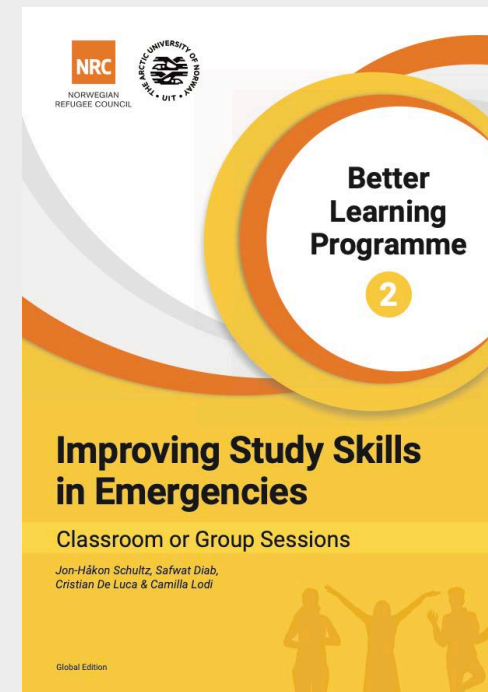
# An **adaptable** intervention.

Suitable for refugee, displaced, and host communities; the three components of programme intervention include:



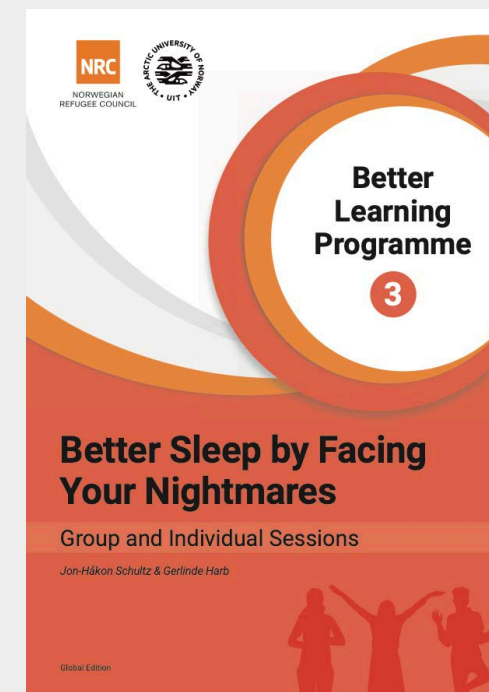
## **BLP I**

a general, classroom-based psychosocial support approach encompassing all children and young people.



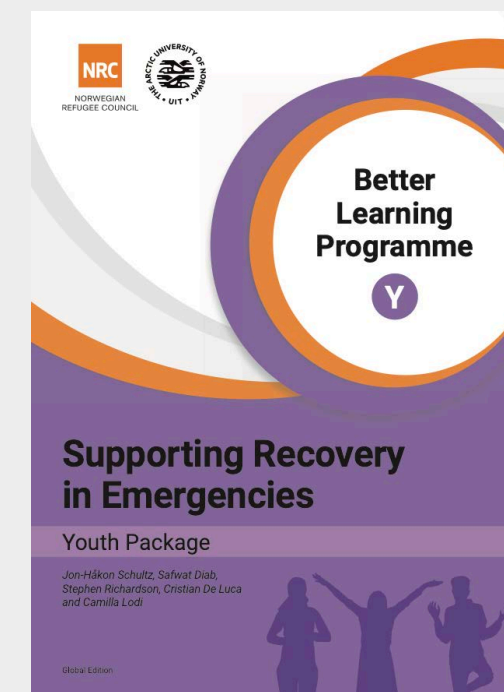
## **BLP II**

a small group or classroom based intervention to support learning for students who are academically underperforming.



## **BLP III**

a specialised, clinical approach to address nightmares, which many children experience as chronic symptom of traumatic stress.



## **BLP Youth**

is a combination of BLP1 and BLP2 techniques to be used in non-formal education settings for young people.







# An **evidence-based** approach to psychosocial support and social emotional learning.

## **The history**

NRC's BLP was introduced in Palestine in 2012, and since then, it has been successfully scaled up and mainstreamed in UNRWA and Ministry of Education schools. Based on the strong results in Palestine, and the high demand for psychosocial support programming, the BLP is being introduced to all NRC education programmes across the world.

## **Academic research**

The BLP is the product of a long-standing research practice collaboration between NRC and the University of Tromsø. Most recently, the University of Auckland and MHPSS Collaborative. The programme is constantly undergoing joint monitoring and revision to account for new research, field-based learning and best practices as they arise.





After NRC's intervention in Palestine, 67% of the children reported a full reduction in trauma-related nightmares.



**BEFORE (THE BLP) I USED TO FEEL SOME JOY, BUT NOT A LOT. I HAD MANY NIGHTMARES WHERE PEOPLE AND EVEN ANIMALS WOULD BE CHASING ME AND TRYING TO KILL ME. THEY WOULD WANT ME TO DIE. WHEN I WAS COMING TO SCHOOL I DIDN'T FEEL VERY HAPPY. THEN WE STARTED THE BLP AND THE TEACHER REALLY HELPED US FEEL BETTER AND MORE RELAXED ... WHILE I STILL HAVE NIGHTMARES SOMETIMES, I NOW FEEL MORE JOY AND I FEEL HAPPINESS IN MY LIFE.**

*A male BLP participant living in the West Bank.*





**NRC incentive-based volunteers test out the new BLP App, aimed at building the understanding and capacity of parents and teachers supporting trauma-affected children.**



**THROUGH THE BLP, CHILDREN WHO STRUGGLE WITH STRESS AND NIGHTMARES FROM THE TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES OF WAR AND DISPLACEMENT RECEIVE HELP TO BRING DOWN THEIR HIGH LEVELS OF ANXIETY. THIS GIVES THEM MORE ENERGY TO FOCUS ON LEARNING AT SCHOOL. THE CHILDREN GAIN ROUTINES, SECURITY AND FRIENDS. BY GIVING THEM STRUCTURE IN THEIR LIVES, NRC GIVES THEM SOMETHING THAT HELPS THEM SURVIVE IN THEIR NEW SITUATION AS REFUGEES: HOPE.**

Professor Jon-Håkon Schultz from the Arctic University of Norway, one of NRC's research partners.





Photo: Tom Peyre-Costa/NRC

Thousands of children lived under ISIS control during the occupation of Sinjar in Iraq. Here a group of Yazidi children can be seen practising some relaxation activities from the BLP in a displacement camp near the city of Dohuk.





**The Norwegian Refugee Council is an independent humanitarian organisation helping people forced to flee. We work in crises across 35 countries, where we help save lives and rebuild futures.**



