

Advocacy paper

First aid as part of the curriculum in schools

Ready-to-use advocacy paper for your exchanges with your Government



Background

Development of future advocacy messages to help National Societies consult with governments and decision-makers was highlighted in a [paper](#) made for the *International first aid, resuscitation and education guidelines 2020*. Based on our duty to advocate for and provide effective first aid education we have identified the need to develop and publish further messages. It is necessary that National Societies continue to advocate quality and relevant first aid courses for different target groups. **World First Aid Day** is an annual opportunity to promote this messaging and develop a communication strategy towards the government for more first aid at school. This paper outlines the main messages to be used when consulting with governments and decision-makers on first aid courses in schools.

Advocating for first aid taught in schools as part of the curriculum

The International Federation of Red Cross Red Crescent Societies, through the Global First Aid Reference Centre, advocates that first aid should be an integral part of educational curricula, starting in kindergarten and continuing in primary and secondary schools. The inclusion of first aid

in schools should be recognized and supported by national governments. Enabling children and young people to learn and give first aid is one strategy to achieving a safer environment and resilience for all citizens.

The inclusion of first aid in the curriculum should promote contextually relevant educational programmes according to children's intellectual, social and behavioural abilities. Programmes should include a broad range of helping behaviours for example providing comfort, managing emotions, accessing help and keeping safe. They should also help children develop knowledge and skills in a broad range of topics including **bleeding, burns, choking, diarrhoea, seizures, fever, injuries to bones, muscles or joints, poisoning, resuscitation, skin wounds and stings and bites.**

There is evidence that children and young people can learn and do first aid, outlined in the [First aid and resuscitation guidelines 2020](#). Emmy De Buck and al. (2015) designed an educational pathway that can be used to integrate first aid into the school curriculum. The educational pathway focuses on the re-emphasis of knowledge and skills through an "encourage, know, repeat" approach. The tool systemises the repetition of topics and identifies the expected outcomes at the end of each learning stage. This **repetition** is very important in the field of first aid because it helps to automate actions so that learners no longer have to think about each step during stressful first aid situations.

The issues

Every year, millions of people die or experience complications from injuries due to a lack of timely assistance or inadequate first aid. First aid including resuscitation is vital actions to effectively and swiftly address injury and illness improving a person's chance of survival.

The International Federation of Red Cross Red Crescent Societies recognizes children as important first aid providers and they also represent a large portion of the population that receives first aid support in emergencies. We believe that providing children with life-saving skills can help build a more resilient generation. On this occasion, we reiterate our call for the introduction of mandatory first aid training and education in schools, as part of our goal of ensuring **universal access to first aid training at all phases of life**. According to the [Red Cross and Red Crescent Global Survey on First Aid](#) (Global First Aid Reference Centre, 2018) around **66% of National Societies provide a specific first aid course for children**. First aid is a compulsory part of the school curriculum in around 20% of countries where National Societies are established. Furthermore, first aid training is compulsory for teachers and school staff in approximately 27% of countries.

Böttiger (2016) wrote that sudden out-of-hospital cardiac arrest (OHCA) with unsuccessful cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is the third leading cause of death in industrialised nations. Up to 70% of OHCA are witnessed by family members, friends, and other bystanders. Thus, the life-threatening gap in time before Emergency Services personnel reaches the person can be successfully bridged by laypeople. Bystander CPR increases the person's chances of survival two- to four-fold. However, bystander CPR rates are 60–80% in only a very few countries; in most countries the rate is far below 20%. Mandatory nationwide training of school children has the highest impact for improving the bystander CPR rate. This appears to be the most successful way to reach the entire population. In support, the World Health Organization (WHO) has endorsed the "[Kids Save](#)

Lives” Statement in 2015, a joint statement from the European Resuscitation Council (ERC) and many others organizations.

Furthermore, children are more vulnerable to risks than adults because they are still learning to manage risks in their environment and have different patterns of exposure to risks. Child injuries are a global health issue. In many countries, injuries are the leading cause of death for children after their first birthday (WHO, 2008). We emphasize the **importance of motivating adults to participate in saving children’s lives and engage in preparing children to become more resilient in emergencies.**



Advocacy messages

- ✓ Children can play a crucial role during emergencies by providing first aid assistance to their peers, families, and the people around them.
- ✓ Children learn more quickly during their early years than at any other time in life. Providing first aid education to children in their early ages will contribute to building their base of knowledge for first aid skills that they can recall in the future.
- ✓ Children are great messengers/ambassadors for their parents and other family members: encourage them to share what they have learned with their families.
- ✓ Training children in first aid is a crucial investment for now and the future.
- ✓ Children can learn first aid from a young age and should be encouraged to develop their skills and knowledge as they grow.
- ✓ First aid education also helps children to become more responsible especially as first aid becomes a relevant social responsibility.
- ✓ Children and young people are often influenced by their peers and by older children – so schools should encourage first aid learning clubs where they can teach and learn from each other.

- ✓ Children tend to be very motivated to learn first aid – build on this by incorporating first aid into different subjects and activities (sport, mathematics, biology etc).
- ✓ First aid education can be delivered by teachers and educators in schools. In fact, there is emerging evidence that with support, teachers who are trained to facilitate first aid education may be more productive, time-efficient and relevant than bringing in first aid facilitators.
- ✓ At least one person per household should be equipped with lifesaving skills in every country around the globe.
- ✓ First aid is a humanitarian action that should be accessible to all.
- ✓ Governments should promote high-quality compulsory first aid training and education.

Children can save lives

We encourage National Societies to find inspiring stories in your local region to support this statement and to use them to support your advocacy message. For example, below are some inspiring stories where first aid training made a difference:

- Alex, a 4-year old child, called EMS after his mother fell down some stairs ([15\) Four year old calls 911 to help fallen mom - YouTube](#)).
- Stephen, a 8-year old child, learned first aid at school and so he was able to help a woman who collapsed on a street ([15\) Stephen saved a woman's life after learning first aid in school - YouTube](#)).
- Hanna, a 10-year old child, learned first aid at a club at her school so she was able to help her mother when she collapsed at home ([15\) Hanna saved her mum's life after learning first aid at school - YouTube](#)).
- A 13-year old child in Arizona, USA, saved the life of his baseball coach by performing CPR ([13-Year-Old Boy Saves His Baseball Coach's Life by Administering CPR, Calling 911 - ABC News \(go.com\)](#)).

Also, gather any local data that may be available in your region. This can help add impact to your advocacy campaign. For example:

- Percentage of children who **have** learned first aid in your region.
- Percentage of school age children in your region who **could** learn first aid.
- Percentage of children who **want** to learn first aid in your region.
- Outcomes data from emergencies where a child provided first aid.
- Number of emergencies at which children were present.
- Number of ill or injured children.



Advocacy activities

To help National Societies consult with education policy makers to advocate first aid being taught in schools as part of the curriculum we would like to highlight few examples of advocacy activities:

- ✓ meet and consult with policy makers asking them to put first aid on the curriculum;
- ✓ ask influencers on media to talk about the importance of children and young people learning first aid
- ✓ ask people to write to their MP or sign a petition to get first aid on the curriculum;
- ✓ ask journalists in the media to present or write about the role children and young people can play in a resilient society, and the importance of first aid on the curriculum ;
- ✓ ask people to share their stories on social media on this topic.

Offering first aid training for children contributes to the implementation of one of the resolutions of the 32nd International Conference of Red Cross and Red Crescent (2015).

"Children are ambassadors of the first aid in their local environment".



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