



Key Soft Skills for Cross-Sectoral Youth Development Outcomes

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What are Soft Skills?

Soft skills refer to a broad set of skills, behaviors, and personal qualities that:

- enable people to effectively navigate their environment
- work well with others
- perform well
- achieve their goals

Soft skills complement technical, vocational, and academic skills



Challenges

Soft skills rival technical skills in fostering positive youth outcomes, including workforce success, social and health behaviors, and education.

- But *which* soft skills are key to success *across* sectors?
- Is there a core set that can focus youth programming?
- How can terminology, definitions, and measures be made comparable to build evidence across fields?

Key Soft Skills for Cross-Sectoral Youth Outcomes



Setting the Stage

USAID has funded a series of investments investigating which soft skills are critical for multiple positive youth development outcomes



WORKFORCE CONNECTIONS
KEY "SOFT SKILLS" THAT FOSTER YOUTH
WORKFORCE SUCCESS: TOWARD A
CONSENSUS ACROSS FIELDS
JUNE 2015



**KEY SOFT SKILLS FOR CROSS-
SECTORAL YOUTH OUTCOMES**



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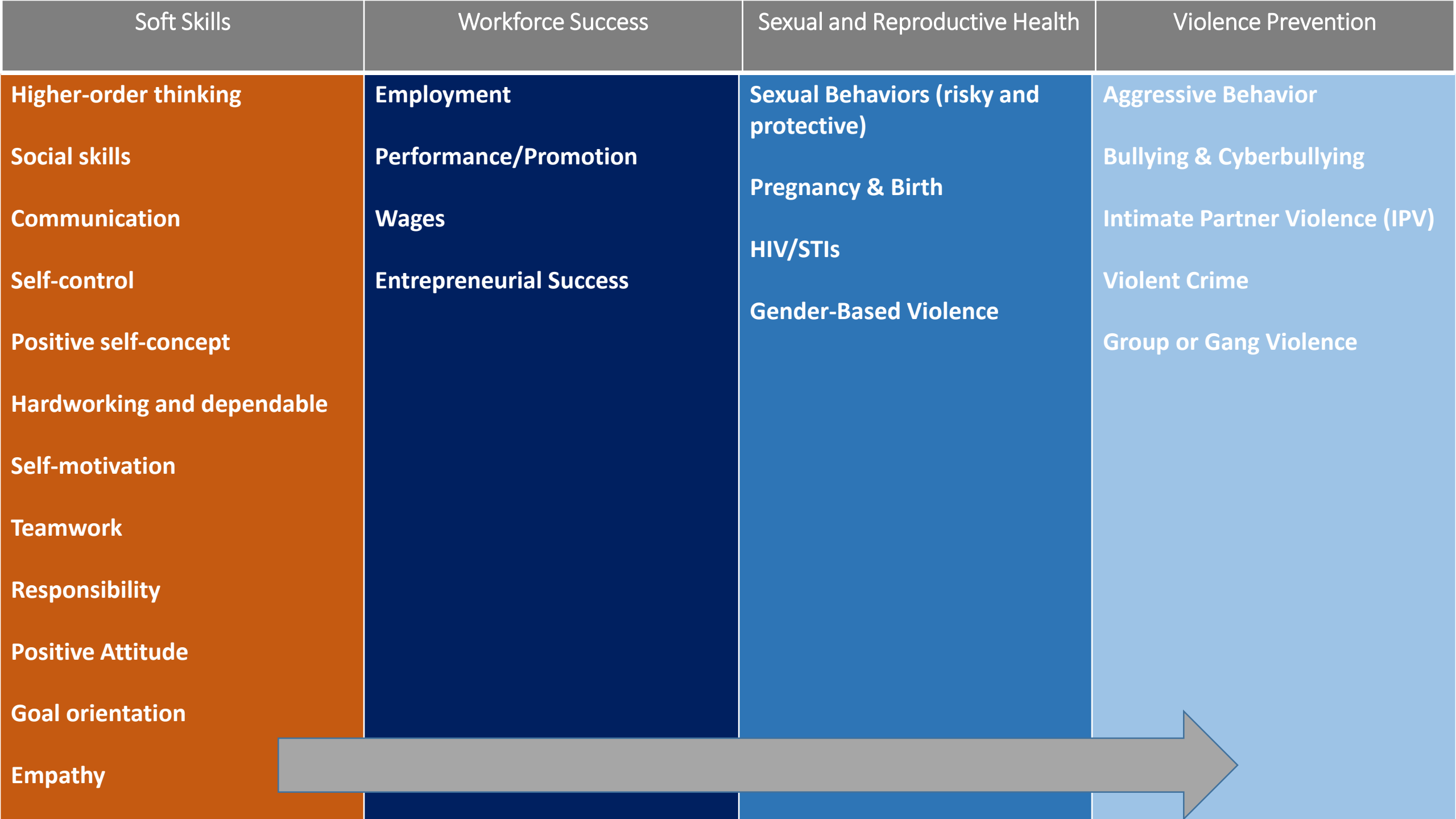
**MEASURING SOFT SKILLS & LIFE SKILLS IN
INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAMS**

A REVIEW AND INVENTORY OF TOOLS



**GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR BUILDING SOFT SKILLS
AMONG ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS**





Process for Selecting Most Supported Soft Skills

Step 1: Review of Findings from the Literature
→ **224 studies that met inclusion criteria**

Step 2: Consideration of breadth, quality, and regional diversity of research, as well as expert and stakeholder input

Step 3: Consideration of the malleability of the skills

Most Supported Skills



Most Supported Skills Across 3 Areas

- Positive self-concept: *Self-confidence, self-efficacy, self-awareness and beliefs, self-esteem, sense of well-being, pride*
- Self-control: *Delay gratification, control impulses, direct and focus attention, manage emotions, regulate behaviors*
- Higher order thinking skills: *Problem-solving, critical thinking, decision-making*

Most Supported Skills in the Literature Within the Domains of Workforce Success, Violence Prevention, and Sexual and Reproductive Health

WORKFORCE SUCCESS

Social skills
Higher order thinking skills
Self-control
Positive self-concept
Communication
Hardworking & dependable
Self-motivation
Teamwork
Responsibility
Positive attitude

VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Self-control
Social skills
Empathy
Higher order thinking skills
Positive self-concept
Integrity/ethics
Resilience
Communication
Responsibility
Positive attitude

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Positive self-concept
Self-control
Communication
Goal orientation
Higher order thinking skills
Integrity/ethics
Positive attitude
Social skills
Responsibility
Empathy

Top 5 skill across all three domains

Top 10 skill across all three domains

Other skill

Most Supported Skills by Outcome in the Violence Prevention Literature

EVIDENCE RANKING	ALL OUTCOMES	AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR	BULLYING/ CYBERBULLYING	INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE	VIOLENT CRIME	GROUP/GANG VIOLENCE
	1 Self-control	Self-control	Self-control	Social skills	Self-control	Self-control
	2 Social skills	Social skills	Empathy*	Empathy* Self-control*	Empathy	Social skills
	3 Empathy	Empathy			Communication Integrity/ethics	Positive self-concept Empathy
	4 Positive self-concept	Positive self-concept			Social skills* Higher order thinking skills*	Integrity/ethics* Responsibility*
	5 Higher order thinking skills	Higher order thinking skills				

* skills with less than 3 positive empirical findings

Note: Cells that contain more than one skill indicate that multiple skills received the same amount of empirical support.

Recommendations

- Include sector-relevant skills in programs
- Introduce soft skill development strategies as early as appropriate and reinforce as youth age
- Provide opportunities to practice soft skills in various situations that youth will need them for
- Provide content knowledge needed to support soft skills



Towards a New Measure

FHI 360 is developing a measurement tool that:

- **Measures at least 3 key soft skills**
 - Positive self-concept
 - Self-control
 - Higher order thinking skills
- **Can be used among beneficiaries of youth development programs that seek to improve a range of outcomes**
 - Workforce success
 - Sexual and reproductive health
 - Violence prevention
 - Education
- **Is scalable and adaptable for USAID youth programs in many contexts**
- **Is designed for use among older adolescents (15-19 year olds)**