Learning update 3
MAY 2018

About this Update
This is the last of three learning updates in which we share the emerging insights from our third learning and innovation cycle (Oct 2017 – Feb 2018).

We present further learning which has emerged during the testing of innovation concepts developed during our second learning and innovation cycle. We also explain how we have refined these innovation concepts in response to the new insights and how we plan to take these ideas forward. As before, information shared here is emergent and part of a continually evolving process of learning and implementation.

This learning update is intended for researchers and practitioners who are interested in learning more about how resilience approaches might be used in working with street-connected children.

To find out more, visit: buildingwithbamboo.org

Building with Bamboo is an international learning project exploring resilience-based approaches to working with street-connected children who are exposed to sexual abuse and sexual exploitation.

The project builds on findings from Oak Foundation’s Bamboo research initiative, which sought to understand resilience in children exposed to sexual abuse and sexual exploitation.

It is led by the Consortium for Street Children (CSC) and undertaken in collaboration with three partners from the CSC network: CWISH in Nepal, JUCONI in Ecuador and S.A.L.V.E. International in Uganda. Each partner is conducting learning and innovation activities to explore the forms a resilience-based approach to working with street-connected children might usefully take. Activities are designed and overseen by the social development consultancy Keep Your Shoes Dirty (KYSQ) and led by Resilience Champions at each learning site.
JUCONI, Ecuador
JUCONI delivers personalised interventions to support vulnerable children and their families to learn from their experiences, develop self-esteem and build healthy relationships.

⇒ JUCONI’s Resilience Champion is Martha Espinoza

S.A.L.V.E. International, Uganda
S.A.L.V.E. aims to reduce the number of young people living on the streets through counselling, care and learning. They also support children on the streets to re-settle into their families and to re-enter education.

⇒ S.A.L.V.E.’s Resilience Champion is Alfred Ochaya

CWISH, Nepal
CWISH works with child domestic workers, offering rehabilitation, legal advice, counselling and family reintegration support. They also facilitate child domestic workers (CDWs) to attend school and access to safe spaces services.

⇒ CWISH’s Resilience Champion is Krishna P. Subedi

OUR APPROACH TO ‘RESILIENCE’

Building with Bamboo acknowledges that the concept of resilience is impossible to universally define. However, we recognise the following key elements:

• A ‘resilient child’ is one who copes better with adversity than he or she might be expected to.
• Resilience may be present in individual or group contexts.
• Resilience should be seen as a process in interaction with the environment, not an inherent quality in the child, and must be viewed in the wider context of children’s lives.¹

Concepts of resilience vary across different socio-cultural systems. Given this, we developed local narratives of resilience which identified the locally relevant and meaningful components of ‘resilience’ in each learning site.²

A resilience-based approach is one which focusses on strengths and which recognises children’s agency to negotiate adversity and develop coping strategies in the context of appropriate support.

⇒ To find out more, visit: buildingwithbamboo.org

¹ For more information on approaches to resilience, see KYSD’s literature review.
² For more information on local narratives of resilience, see KYSD’s thinking paper.
Learning & innovation cycle 3 –
local learning and design to refine
our resilience-based approaches

The combination of local learning and design processes that we are using to inform and refine our resilience-based programme practice is highly experimental. Taking the insights as a starting point, the process involves continually learning about and subsequently adapting our resilience-based programme approaches at each learning site to make them more effective in terms of promoting resilience and well-being amongst street-connected children. This process enables us to develop increasingly situated programme approaches in each place, which means programmes are more relevant to the particular local challenges and contexts. During learning and innovation cycle 3, Resilience Champions tested their innovation concepts they had developed during learning and innovation cycle 2 and they will use their learning to continue refining and testing their resilience-based approaches in the future.

Within the learning and innovation cycles 2 and 3, we use this process to adapt our resilience-based approaches to respond to the learning and make them more effective.3

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3 The approach presented here and in the accompanying description is informed by elements of the Evidence-Based Design approach to policy and programming developed by UNIDRR and The Policy Lab. For further reading see:
EMERGING LEARNING

The Resilience Champions distilled a series of key insights from the data collection which were used to further refine their resilience-based approaches with street-connected children as they move beyond the official learning and innovation process. As such, the insights below extend and build on previous learning and bring out new topics or perspectives, deepening our understanding about resilience-based programme delivery and trajectories, local notions of ‘resilience’ and connections between increased resilience and child well-being in each place. These insights have been generated in collaboration with Resilience Champions in response to stories gathered from programme staff and children about their experiences of delivering and participating in resilience-based programme activities at each learning partner. This section shares these insights, together with some quotes and stories from Resilience Champions’ and children’s experiences.

1 A POSITIVE APPROACH IS THE FIRST STEP THAT BEGINS THE PROCESS OF HELPING TO BUILD A CHILD’S RESILIENCE.

Street-connected children need a positive environment in order to develop resilience. An approach which foregrounds positive feedback is an important first step in developing a strong relationship with a child. This involves constantly focusing on positives and giving children positive feedback about themselves despite the negative ways they might behave towards staff or others. However, as a trusting relationship develops, it is also important to “let the negative stories come out” because building resilience is ultimately about helping street-connected children to deal with their negative experiences. Combined with constant and consistent relationship building, a positive approach can ultimately lead to the development of a strong, trusting relationship which enables organisations to help street-connected children to reach their potential rather than just ‘survive’.

A positive approach is something we encourage with staff, teachers and employers. We ask them to begin by focussing on the positives; to reflect on positive moments in their own childhoods to help them understand how important positive experiences and reactions are, and to think about how they use words and gestures towards CDWs. As a result, they become more sensitive in their responses to children, who are then more inclined to open up to them.

Krishna, CWISH, Nepal

* All names have been changed.
In a way, the story exercises have been hard for children. They heard a lot of strong and negative stories and felt a lot of difficult things - but it is important. Children have to deal with lots of these hard things in their lives and this gives us an insight into how they feel and shows us that helping them build resilience is about supporting them to deal with the overwhelming, all consuming negative aspects of their lives.

Martha, JUCONI, Ecuador

2 IT IS IMPORTANT TO SUPPORT THE FAMILY AND THE COMMUNITY SO THEY CAN ULTIMATELY BECOME THE SUPPORT NETWORK FOR STREET-CONNECTED CHILDREN.

We know that families and communities are often well placed to provide protection for street-connected children living in difficult situations. In fact, where the family and community network is absent or is replaced by negativity, abuse and violence, this is actively detrimental to the work organisations are doing to promote resilience at the individual level in street-connected children themselves. Therefore, helping children to develop a strong positive attachment with a parent or other care-giver is very important as this relationship is crucial for building resilience within children and the family as a whole. One way we have explored doing this is by bringing parents to the streets to meet with their children to start the process of re-building that relationship based on understanding and trust.

Alfred, S.A.L.V.E, Uganda

3 RAISING STREET-CONNECTED CHILDREN’S AWARENESS OF THEIR RIGHTS IS PART OF RESILIENCE PROMOTION BUT IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO DEVELOP THEIR RESILIENCE.

Organisational work to raise awareness about street-connected children’s rights, especially in relation to sexual violence and abuse is important but does not lead to the development of resilience on its own. Rather, it is the access to positive and trusting relationships with parents and other caregivers, teachers and social workers and good peer support networks which leads to increased reporting of sexual abuse and violence. Such relationships also provide the space and support needed for street-connected children to develop their own strategies and solutions to the adverse situations they find themselves in, as developing resilience is also about enabling street-connected children’s agency within supportive and protective family and community contexts.

Krishna, CWISH, Nepal

4 OUR STORY TELLING APPROACHES ARE HELPING US TO BETTER UNDERSTAND STREET-CONNECTED CHILDREN WE WORK WITH AND HELPING THEM TO DEVELOP EMPATHY.

Story telling is a powerful approach through which street-connected children we work with can share their experiences and feelings. The stories reveal how children feel about the difficult daily realities they face and their capacity, or lack of it, for developing resilience in these contexts. They give important insight into how street-connected children respond to challenging situations by providing space for them to reveal their feelings to us and for us to hear, understand and help them deal with these feelings. As a result, street-connected children become increasingly able to listen and share with each other and show empathy towards each other.

Children can be more aware of their rights [through our work] but they will only share with a “trusted one”. One girl, a CDW, was sexually abused by a government official but it was only through the good relationships she had with CWISH staff and their support that she became able to report it and file a case in the court. Despite several pressures from the perpetrator and her own family, the case is now in process and the perpetrator is being held in custody.

Alfred, S.A.L.V.E, Uganda

We need to build better relationships with parents, as well as children, in order to work more effectively with them together. Bringing parents to children in the street is really important and we are expanding this approach. It tests the parents, brings them to the children in the first instance, rather than the other way around. Mayamba (16 yrs) was visited on the street by his father and this helped us to re-establish their relationship. The father continued to visit his son until they were both ready for Mayamba to go home with him.

Alfred, S.A.L.V.E, Uganda
5 **DESPITE SHARING STORIES AND LISTENING TO OTHERS, STREET-CONNECTED CHILDREN CAN STILL ULTIMATELY FEEL VERY ALONE RATHER THAN RESILIENT.**

When street-connected children share stories and find similarities with other street-connected children’s lives, it certainly helps to provide them with some immediate relief. It is an activity that promotes positive feelings and makes children feel comfortable and reassured. However, this kind of story and example sharing approach does not appear to be helpful in healing children’s psychological trauma or addressing children’s often deep emotional needs for affection, comfort and protection and, therefore, promoting resilience in terms of a sustained ability to cope with, and respond to, adversity.

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6 **CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR STREET-CONNECTED CHILDREN TO SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES AND FEELINGS LEADS TO INCREASED SUPPORT SEEKING BEHAVIOUR.**

The provision of opportunities to share experiences and feelings with peers, staff, social workers and teachers seems to encourage street-connected children to become more open and proactive in seeking support from our organisations. Street-connected children are also strategic in their support seeking behaviour. They want a happy ending to their story; they want to know that there will be a positive impact in their lives as a result of their involvement in our resilience-based programmes.

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7 **STREET-CONNECTED CHILDREN ARE DEVELOPING FEELINGS OF “I CAN” THROUGH OUR RESILIENCE-BASED APPROACHES.**

We know that street-connected children are developing talents, skills and learning through their involvement in our programmes but this seems to be relevant to promoting resilience in the way that it helps develop their self-belief. In particular, street-connected children feel that other opportunities are available to them when they have developed these talents, skills and learning because they can use them for productive purpose, for example, earning money in new and different ways.

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8 **OPPORTUNITIES FOR STAFF TO SHARE THEIR OWN STORIES IS IMPORTANT FOR ADDRESSING THEIR OWN FEELINGS IN RELATION TO WORKING WITH STREET-CONNECTED CHILDREN IN DIFFICULT SITUATIONS.**

The regular opportunities our learning activities provide for staff to share stories and reflect – individually, one-to-one and as a group – provide space for them to off-load the challenges, stresses and pressures they face in their work, problem solve with the support of other staff and gain the encouragement they need to continue or the confidence they need to change direction. This is important not only for addressing their own feelings in relation to the work they do, but also, usefully reflect on the process of building resilience in the street-connected children they work with.
**FURTHER REFINED INNOVATIONS**

In response to the emerging learning from Learning & Innovation Cycle 3, the Resilience Champions have continued to evolve the innovation concepts they are trying out. They will continue to use the learning and innovation processes, tools and techniques we have developed to further test and refine their resilience-based approaches in the future.

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<tr>
<th>JUCONI, ECUADOR</th>
<th>S.A.L.V.E. INTERNATIONAL, UGANDA</th>
<th>CWISH, NEPAL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What was the original innovation concept?</strong></td>
<td>Strengthening staff capacity to recognise trauma in children and other family members.</td>
<td>Strengthening staff capacity to build better parent-child relationships.</td>
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<td><strong>How did we refine the innovation concept in Learning &amp; Innovation Cycle 2?</strong></td>
<td>Building staff capacity to recognise both personal and social vulnerability in order to build the resilience of communities and support children to protect themselves.</td>
<td>Working more consistently with families over time to better develop trusted relationships between staff and families as well as children, in order to better equip staff to support family resilience.</td>
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<td><strong>How have we further refined the innovation concept in learning &amp; innovation cycle 3?</strong></td>
<td>Shifting to provide opportunities for staff to reflect on their experiences and emotions related to working in challenging situations, in order to support their capacity to be effective and develop more focussed interventions on vulnerable children, families and communities.</td>
<td>Shifting to work more closely with parents on a one-to-one basis, as well as continuing to work with children and parents together, alongside extending our positive relationship building approach to the community level to promote better and more supportive relationships between children and community members.</td>
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<td><strong>Why have we refined the innovation concept in this way?</strong></td>
<td>Because we are increasingly aware that the staff team are prone to becoming overwhelmed by the situations they work in. As a result they can exhibit the same patterns of emotions and behaviour as those exhibited by the families they support and this can impact on their ability to provide focused, effective and balanced interventions.</td>
<td>Because we have learned that working with parents on a one-to-one level, in a similar way to how we work with children, is a necessary step in building better parent-child relationships and that positive community relationships provide an important context for building child resilience.</td>
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<td><strong>What are we hoping to achieve with the refined innovation concept?</strong></td>
<td>A staff team who better understand the connections between emotions, behaviour and thoughts – their own as well as those of family members they support – to better guide and support children, families and communities through JUCONI’s approach.</td>
<td>A staff team who are increasingly effective at building positive relationships between parents, children and communities to provide children with positive contexts from which to build their resilience.</td>
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WHAT’S COMING NEXT?
Building with Bamboo runs until the end of June 2018. Our third and final learning and innovation cycle ran from October 2017 to February 2018. At the end of the project we will publish a full learning paper.

LEARN MORE

Join our online Community of Practice: buildingwithbamboo.org

Read our blog to stay updated on the project and to hear about future learning updates and webinars. You can also register for free to access learning resources and online discussions.

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