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, JUCON 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 research consultancy Keep Your Shoes Dirty (KYSD) and led by Resilience Champions at each learning site.

ABOUT THIS UPDATE

This is the first of three learning updates in which we share the emerging insights from our first learning and innovation cycle (January – March 2017).

Here, we outline what learning is emerging as we develop and trial resilience-based approaches across our three learning sites. We also explore how we will be adapting these approaches in the next cycle. As such, information shared here is part of a continually evolving process of learning and innovation.

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

TO FIND OUT MORE, VISIT: buildingwithbamboo.org
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, see “Summary of literature on resilience in relation to children and families”
² For more information, see “Local Narratives of Resilience”
Our Learning Approach

Learning & innovation is organised around 3 cycles taking place over a year

1. We conduct learning activities to gather qualitative data

2. We distil key insights to identify emerging learning

3. We reflect on learning and current approaches to make sense, innovate and pilot ideas

We trained the resilience champions to lead the learning activities

We designed learning activities to be used with children, staff and community members

We developed local learning frameworks to guide learning around local components of resilience and well-being

We developed local narratives of ‘resilience’ and ‘well-being’ to situate concepts in local socio-cultural settings

Our Learning Partners

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 resettle into their families and to re-enter education.

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

Cwish, Nepal
Cwish work with child domestic workers, offering rehabilitation, counselling and family reintegration support. They also offer drop-in services for child domestic workers and support to them to attend school.

Cwish’s Resilience Champion is Krishna P. Subedi
EMERGING LEARNING

The Resilience Champions distilled a series of key insights from their data collection which could be used to inform and develop their resilience-based approaches with street-connected children in the next learning and innovation cycle. They are part of an ongoing learning process and point to potential areas for consideration as the Resilience Champions continue to innovate their approaches. This section shares these insights, together with some quotes and stories from their own and children’s experiences.

1. IT IS IMPORTANT TO CONSIDER AND DEVELOP THE RESILIENCE OF PARENTS AND FAMILIES AS WELL AS CHILDREN.

Working with the whole family to build strong attachments with each other makes it more likely that children will open up to and be supported by their parents. This seems to increase the resilience of the family as well as the individual child.

Sometimes parents have the same or less resilience than their children. They are vulnerable themselves and sometimes more vulnerable than their children.

Martha, JUCONI, Ecuador

2. A POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT IS IMPORTANT FOR STREET-CONNECTED CHILDREN TO BE ABLE TO DEVELOP THE CONFIDENCE THEY NEED TO SHARE NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES AND FEELINGS.

A positive environment includes regular positive feedback, feeling safe and protected, and access to information about services, rights and legal processes.

Rita* (13yrs) was abused by her father for 4 years. Despite being close to her aunt, Rita did not disclose the abuse to her. After participating in a CWISH class, during which she learned about her rights and how abuse can be reported to the police, she went back home and told her aunt. The abuse was reported and Rita is now in a safe house and the step-father is being prosecuted.

Krishna, CWISH, Nepal

3. TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS HELP ENABLE STREET-CONNECTED CHILDREN TO SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES AND SEEK HELP.

Building trusting relationships between children, staff, families and other stakeholders is important for making children feel safe and supported, which appears to improve their ability to cope with challenges they face.

Ishmail (13yrs) lost his father to AIDS and felt very bad and ended up on the street. His friends encouraged him to go back to school and his teachers are very supportive, sometimes describing themselves as his “parents”.

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

*All names have been changed
Children are seeking support from S.a.L.V.e., others in the community and each other, for example asking community members to keep money and other valuable items safe.

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

The children we work with are increasingly able to talk to parents and say “this is happening to me” and they are increasingly confident that the response from parents is not going to simply be anger.

Martha, JUCONI, Ecuador

4 DEVELOPING THE ABILITY OF CHILDREN AND PARENTS TO SELF-REFLECT AND SHARE THESE REFLECTIONS IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF PROMOTING RESILIENCE.

Through reflecting and sharing about their experiences, both positive and negative, parents and children gradually learn how to relate and respond to each other in better ways. This seems to promote the resilience of the whole family unit.

SUPPORT SEEKING BEHAVIOUR APPEARS TO BE GROWING AMONG THE STREET-CONNECTED CHILDREN WE WORK WITH.

As a result of our interventions, children seem to be more actively seeking and accessing support from community members, peers and organisations. This makes them feel happier and could be interpreted as a sign of increased resilience.

Children are seeking support from S.A.L.V.E., others in the community and each other, for example asking community members to keep money and other valuable items safe.

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

A maths teacher in a public school in Kathmandu attended CWISH training. Before, the children were fearful of speaking with him but after he learnt new skills they now open up to him and he informs CWISH if there is a problem that needs addressing.

Krishna, CWISH, Nepal

IT IS IMPORTANT TO WORK WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS AND INFLUENCERS TO PROMOTE RESILIENCE IN CHILDREN.

It is sometimes more effective to work through others, such as teachers, employers or community influencers who are better placed to develop trusting relationships with children or help change a negative situation.
7 STREET-CONNECTED CHILDREN CAN APPEAR TO BE COPING WITH DIFFICULT SITUATIONS WHEN IN FACT THEY ARE STRUGGLING.

Children can become accustomed to dealing with abuse and violence. It is sometimes easy to mistake confident behaviour as an indication of being strong enough to cope with the challenges they face, when in fact they are very stressed and overcome with negative emotion.

Roberto (10yrs) seemed very independent and clever. He said he didn't need help because he could cope with anything but he kept asking us to visit him. We began to see he could not tolerate any joke, criticism or disappointment. All these things made him very angry.

Martha, JUCONI, Ecuador

8 STREET-CONNECTED CHILDREN ARE CAPABLE OF DEVELOPING THEIR OWN STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH THE CHALLENGES THEY FACE.

Children’s involvement in our activities appears to be strengthening their ability to develop strategies to deal with challenges and change the outcomes of negative situations.

Child Domestic Workers (CDWs) are becoming more honest and respectful towards their employers which is making their employers treat them well. This is helping CDWs have garima (a life of dignity) which is important in our culture.

Krishna, CWISH, Nepal

9 STREET-CONNECTED CHILDREN’S CHARACTERISTICS, EXPERIENCES AND FEELINGS ARE INCREASINGLY INDICATIVE OF GREATER RESILIENCE AND WELL-BEING AFTER PARTICIPATING IN OUR ACTIVITIES.

Children who participate in our activities appear to demonstrate increased happiness, confidence, self-control, self-respect and feelings of power. They also demonstrate increased interest in participating in our activities and in spending time with their families.

Ebo (14yrs) explained how his friend annoyed him and how he thought about using anger to retaliate – he wanted to cut his friend with a panga. After thinking through the consequences, he was able to exercise self-control.

Alfred, S.A.L.V.E. International., Uganda
In response to emerging learning, the Resilience Champions developed ideas to pilot in the next learning and innovation cycle. These innovations are small additions or adaptations to their existing resilience-based approaches which reflect an ethos of continual iteration and improvement in implementation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the innovation?</th>
<th>JUconi, Ecuador</th>
<th>S.A.L.V.E. International, Uganda</th>
<th>CWish, Nepal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strengthening staff capacity to recognise trauma in children and other family members.</td>
<td>Strengthening staff capacity to build better child-parent relationships.</td>
<td>Strengthening staff capacity to use positive feedback approaches with children.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is involved?</th>
<th>JUconi, Ecuador</th>
<th>S.A.L.V.E. International, Uganda</th>
<th>CWish, Nepal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A basic training package on trauma identification to be delivered with a small group of staff.</td>
<td>A series of activities to encourage staff to reflect on the components of a positive attachment and why it is important, so that they can be carried through into their work with children and parents.</td>
<td>Workshop activities with staff to explore ideas which can help them concentrate on giving positive feedback to children in gentle ways that don’t overwhelm them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why are we trying it out?</th>
<th>JUconi, Ecuador</th>
<th>S.A.L.V.E. International, Uganda</th>
<th>CWish, Nepal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Because we have seen that it can be difficult to identify trauma from children’s outward behaviour.</td>
<td>Because we have seen that promoting resilience in children is deeply connected to promoting the resilience of the whole family unit and that the resilience of both family and child can be enhanced through developing positive attachments between them.</td>
<td>Because we have seen that using positive feedback helps staff develop stronger relationships with children which forms a good basis from which to work further on developing their resilience and well-being.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are we hoping to see?</th>
<th>JUconi, Ecuador</th>
<th>S.A.L.V.E. International, Uganda</th>
<th>CWish, Nepal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staff who have a basic theoretical understanding of the identification of trauma and who can readily identify signs of trauma in their daily work.</td>
<td>Staff who have acquired the knowledge and confidence to respond to the emotional needs of children and their parents and to help build positive relationships between them.</td>
<td>Staff who feel more confident in their ability to use positive feedback to promote the development of strong, trusting relationships with children they support.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHAT’S COMING NEXT?

Building with Bamboo runs until March 2018. Our second learning and innovation cycle is running May-July 2017 and our third cycle is running September-November 2017. After each cycle we will publish a learning update and host an accompanying webinar. At the end of the project we will publish a full learning paper.

HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

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 to access learning resources and online discussions for free.