

Section A

Preface

Children across the world endure adverse childhood experiences. Across the globe, children are exposed to risks that are debilitating to various and grave degrees: risk factors can range from exposure to political violence and forced migration, the deleterious effects of climate change, and to unsafe cultural practices to name a few. The most prevalent risk in children's lives, however, is poverty. Half of the human population is living under US \$2.50 per day. Poverty is not just an indicator, but gives psychological meaning to economic hardship, and penetrates all avenues of a child's life. Nearly 385 million children across the world live in extreme poverty - less than US \$1.90 per day - with the highest percentage of these children living in Sub-Saharan Africa. Sub-Saharan Africa has both the highest rates of children living in extreme poverty at just under 50 per cent, as well as the largest share of the world's extremely poor children, at just over 50 per cent (UNICEF, 2016).

Children living in poverty will grow into adults living in poverty, propagating the cycle of intergenerational poverty. It is imperative that childhood poverty is addressed, and children living in adverse conditions be provided the capabilities to emerge successful in the face of adversity. Developing resilience to these adverse experiences is a key strategy to buffer a plethora of negative effects. Resilience is the psychological ability of an individual to positively react to negative experiences, and overcome serious hardship, obstacles and adversities to foster positive healthy development. For example, a child growing up with unhealthy family relationships and a lack of supportive bonds can grow up to be an adult with stable relationships who can build a healthy family of their own.

Play is an easy, natural and universal practice that builds resilience. Play comes naturally to all children- and is a seemingly simple and light-hearted phenomenon. We need to combine the power of play as a pathway to building resilience, and provide children with the opportunity to further explore play in their home and school environments.

Play and Resilience is "A China-Africa Collaborative Project" for building a peaceful and sustainable future for children in Africa. The project was implemented in 10 communities in three countries - Zimbabwe, South Africa and Nigeria. The project is funded by the Victoria Charitable Trust Fund and implemented by UNESCO. It aims at promoting young children's resilience and potential to foster a peaceful and sustainable future through play in a conducive, stimulating, safe and child-friendly environment. Specifically, the project seeks to:

- Raise awareness among educators about the importance of early childhood care and education and the value of play in building children's resilience.
- Develop materials and tools that are practical and adaptable and will improve the quality of childcare and the learning environment and processes.
- Grow the capacity of educators and other stakeholders to design and implement effective curricula on resilience building through play.
- Foster relationships that are sustainable and collaborative between families, primary schools and communities, in order to continue this work beyond the project.

This toolkit is therefore premised on the objectives to build the capacity of various stakeholders such as caregivers/teachers, school managers, curriculum planners and policy makers who are key actors in the process of growth and development of children. It is also aimed at equipping these stakeholders with the knowledge and pedagogical skills to translate research, policy and curriculum to practical knowledge and activities for children in the school environment. The toolkit offers directions for facilitators who will be working with caregivers/teachers using the materials and resources provided and other relevant materials available in an environment where it will be used.

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Introduction to the toolkit

Facilitators are provided with ongoing guidance throughout the manuals on how to navigate the material and deliver the modules effectively in a participatory manner. The manuals are also equipped with detailed instructions on how the sessions should be implemented, and provides suggestions on how to incorporate a participatory and engaging system. All facilitators, and training organizers are required to pay attention to detail to the steps highlighted in the manuals, and in particular the sections How to Use This Manual? for further guidance.

The reference list provides an exhaustive and all-inclusive list of works cited and relied on heavily for the making of this toolkit. A brochure, workshop reports, and a Stories section are included for further reading. The toolkit includes a Policy Brief which serves as a cogent and compelling piece of policy recommendation that consolidates the spirit of the Play & Resilience project adroitly. This document can be used as a piece for easy access and circulation of evidence-based research, and is appropriate for all stakeholders in the education and early childhood development sectors to engage with.

Lastly, all sessions must conclude with the participants' anonymous feedback and evaluation, and this feedback should be constructively incorporated in the process of continuously improving the landscape of ECCE, as well as Play & Resilience across the continent.

This toolkit comprises of multiple sections. It is designed to involve various stakeholders in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) landscape across the continent, with the purpose of increased stakeholder engagement and mobilization in the ECCE sector. This toolkit adapts an interdisciplinary and iterative approach which places the stakeholders at the center of the process, and relies on participatory engagement to evolve into the expected outcomes.

The expected outcomes of this toolkit are that participants will be able to exhibit:



Training Manual for Teachers, Practitioners, and ECCE experts

This manual is targeted at stakeholders in the education and ECCE infrastructure sectors. This manual is meant for teachers, curriculum designers, school administration, ECCE experts and education policy makers. The purpose of this manual is that these stakeholders will adapt the Play & Resilience tools in their education practices, and actively collaborate with each other to constantly improve the ECCE sector.

Training Manual for Parents and Communities

This manual is targeted at stakeholders in ECCE such as parents, primary caregivers, and community members engaged in child care. The purpose of this manual is that these stakeholders will adapt the child rearing practices recommended in this toolkit which are play-based and supportive of building resilience in children.

Manual Components

Each of these manuals include resources and guides on how to use the manuals correctly, and include the required materials, facilitator support and information, evaluations details, and more. Both the manuals are divided into the following modules-

Module 1 - The Importance of Early Childhood Care and Education

Module 2 - Risk Factors, their Effects, and Protective Mechanisms

Module 3 - Resilience and Pathways to Building Resilience

Module 4 - Play-based Strategies for Building Resilience

Module 5 - The Play Environment and Engaging in Safe Play

Module 6 - Avenues for Community and School Collaboration for Building Resilience in Children

Key Concepts and Acronyms

Concept	Definitions	Example
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education	
ECD	Early Childhood Development	
ICT	Information and Communication Technology	
NCCE	National Commission for Colleges of Education	
NPE	The National Policy on Education	
Open-Ended Materials	Play materials	Rubber/soft balls; toys; dolls
Play	A physical or mental leisure activity that is undertaken purely for enjoyment or amusement and has no other objective	
Play-Based Learning	Midway between direct instruction and free play, presenting a learning goal, and scaffolding the environment while allowing children to maintain a large degree of control over their learning	
Risk	An elevated probability of an undesirable outcome	The odds of developing schizophrenia are higher in groups of people who have a biological parent with this disorder
Risk Factor	A measurable characteristic in a group of individuals or their situation that predicts a negative outcome on a specific outcome criterion	Premature birth; parental divorce; poverty; parental mental illness; child maltreatment
Protective Factor	A predictor of better outcomes, particularly in situations of risk or adversity	Airbags in automobiles; 911 services; neonatal intensive care; health insurance
Cumulative Protection	The presence of multiple protective factors in an individual's life	A child in a poor neighborhood has attentive parents, a safe home, supportive kin, a school tutor, and connections to prosocial peers or community organizations
Resilience	Positive adaptation in the context of adversity	Child brought up in poverty excels at school and emerges with high earning capacity in the labor market; Child who was exposed to neglect and emotional harm builds strong bonds and relationships with peers in adulthood
Stakeholders	Any individual or party of individuals with an interest in the area	Caregivers; Teachers; Parents; School Managers; Policy Makers; Community leaders; Special Interest Groups
UBEC	Universal Basic Education Commission	