



# ADDRESSING *local* REALITIES

Transforming global tools



Summary

# About us

## **The Fostering Resilience Initiative:**

Our interdisciplinary team works to ensure positive outcomes for children and youth facing adversity.

By measuring and addressing risks and assets at the child-level, as well as within homes, schools, and communities, we promote a holistic approach to child and youth development. Our goal is to create environments that not only fulfill children's and youth's basic needs, but also promote nurturing relationships, socio-emotional skills, and civic engagement.

We work with non-governmental organizations, policy makers, communities and other stakeholders in seven countries: Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, India, Kenya, Tanzania, and Peru. Our initiative focuses on three key areas:

### **1. Learning and Development**

Improving learning and development of children and youth, both at school and outside of school.

### **2. Risk Measurement**

Developing, validating and piloting measurement tools to assess risks, assets, and outcomes across several countries.

### **3. Global Network for Resilience**

Building a global network of actors who foster systemic resilience.



Neil Boothby  
Director, Fostering Resilience Initiative

# Introduction

**Most Haitians live under the poverty line**, making under USD2 per day (UNDP). The extended unemployment rate is 28%. Quality education has become a top priority for Haiti, where a generation of youth lacks the basic skills needed to succeed in the labor force.

Photo by Beth Rubenstein



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Although assessments for learning and development abound in global development work, it is crucial to adapt them to fit the local context and to ensure translations use language and concepts that are **meaningful to local communities**.

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**Imagine a setting...** where half of Haitian children cannot read a single word when they enter the third grade (Gove 2010; USAID 2012). Teachers lack basic training and private school costs almost 25% of a working parent's yearly salary. The teaching style is limited to dictation and rote learning, and the curricula does not address social and emotional learning.

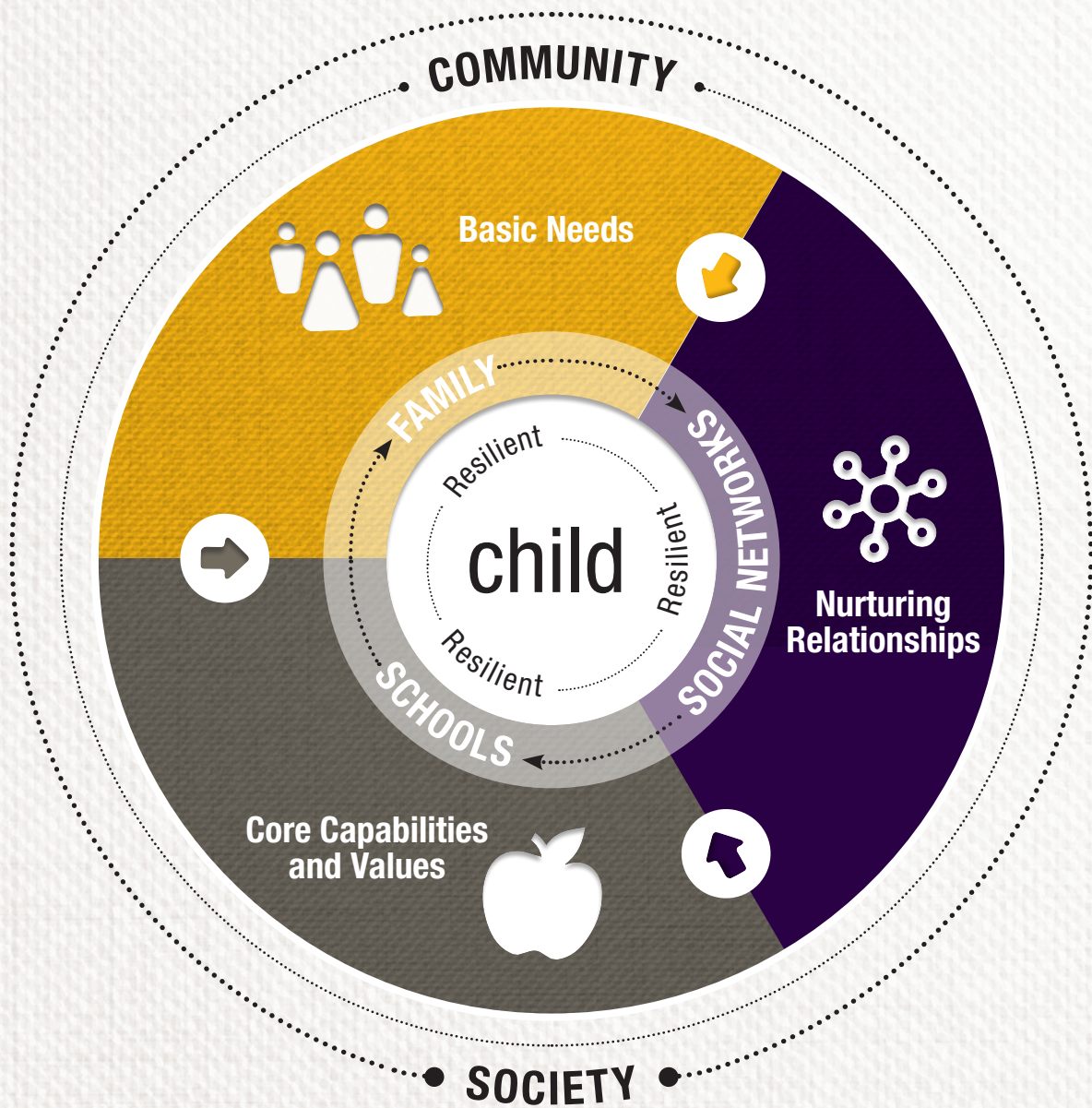
Recognizing the value of a more holistic approach to primary school education, the Alliance for Catholic Education in Haiti (ACE Haiti) at the University of Notre Dame recently integrated a social and emotional learning curriculum within an early grade literacy curriculum that teaches students to read and write in both their mother tongue (Haitian Creole) and French. This is a big leap forward for education in Haiti.

Traditional measures of progress, such as literacy rates for an education program, are crucial benchmarks, but they do not tell us very much about the context behind the numbers and how to improve them. Learning assessments must consider local realities and the multiple layers of a child's life to gain a more comprehensive understanding of a child's skills and capacities, social relationships, and home life. In other words, assessments must be contextualized and cross-culturally adapted, so that the language is understood, and concepts reflect ideas that are meaningful to local communities.

The Fostering Resilience Initiative works alongside ACE Haiti to create ways of measuring progress that capture non-traditional domains, such as social and emotional learning, family and community contexts. This much broader approach to measurement will yield more actionable and locally meaningful information.

# Building blocks **for** children's resilience

**A holistic approach**—one that not only addresses children's basic needs, but also promotes nurturing relationships, socio-emotional skills and civic engagement—is the foundation to fostering resilience in children facing adversity.



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A whole-child approach to primary school learning assessment in Haiti must include more than literacy and numeracy outcomes. It must also measure socio-emotional competencies and influences outside the classroom, such as health, economic status and community factors, to generate insight for educators and policymakers.

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# Addressing *local* Realities at-a-glance



UN Photo/Sophia Paris

**75,000** 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders participated in ACE Haiti’s “Read Haiti Project” serving **350 schools across 5 regions** (2017-2020)



**Primary school enrollment: 57%**  
but fewer than **30%** reach 6<sup>th</sup> grade



**1200** primary school teachers trained by ACE Haiti (2012-2016)

**49%** of Haitian children **cannot read** a single word **when they start 3<sup>rd</sup> grade**



**70%** of Haitian children under 5 live in **poor households**



Photo by Direct Relief

# Why **do** contextualization and adaptation matter?

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## Contextualization

**“The integration of multiple sources of data to understand an individual and their behavior within their temporal, environmental, and social contexts.”**

– Wilkinson, Ferraro, and Kemp 2017

## Cross-cultural adaptation

**“A process to ensure accurate and meaningful measurement of “a similar phenomenon in different cultures” by identifying sources of error related to linguistic accuracy, cultural competency, and conceptual relevance of a translated survey tool.”**

– Guillemin et al. 1993

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During the summer of 2018, the Fostering Resilience Initiative led a cross-cultural adaptation process of three different assessment tools to obtain a holistic picture of children’s social and emotional skills from teachers, children and caregivers. The activities took place in three different communities in northern Haiti (urban, semi-urban and rural).

## What does adaptation look like?

### 8-step process

1. Initial consultation with local stakeholders.
2. Development and translation of tools.
3. Translated tools shared with stakeholders for review and feedback.
4. Formal cognitive interview process, led by local data collectors.
5. Cognitive interviews with respondents.
6. Interview observations and adjustments.
7. Analysis of interview findings.
8. Tool adaptation and finalization.

# 4 key challenges

01

## **Translation versus adaptation.**

Since linguistic and cultural differences are often markers of class status, the class backgrounds of the adaptation teams will shape (and potentially bias) choices about translation and language. It is thus important to incorporate input from different experts and establish a decision-making framework to weigh conflicting opinions.

02

## **Surveying young respondents.**

Children's direct participation helps glean important information about their subjective perceptions, hidden experiences, and skills, but six and seven-year olds may be too young to provide direct feedback during the adaptation stage. In addition to considering research ethics, adaptation efforts must build in different questions and ways to keep young respondents engaged and interested.

03

## **Ensuring locally meaningful measurement.**

Assessment must fit the local education system, classroom contexts and teacher-student relationships, and it must use locally meaningful language.

04

## **Political environment.**

A country's political environment, such as elections, political unrest or violence, can affect the adaptation process and outcomes. For example, political protests may impact data collection or the number of adaptations carried out during the testing period.

Photo by Kentucky Country Day



## Adapting Global Assessment Tools in Haiti

# Lessons from the field...

**It is important to adapt assessments** to fit the local context and to ensure translations use language and concepts that are meaningful to local communities. Here are a few lessons learned from the experiences that the Fostering Resilience Initiative had while adapting global tools in Haiti.



Photo by Evan Carter

### Use locally meaningful language

When caregivers were asked **“What is your relationship to (CHILD’S NAME)?”** some respondents described their relationship dynamic with their child, rather than answering mother, father, grandparent, etc.

When caregivers were asked if they think that perseverance is an important quality for children to learn, many respondents understood it as a religious concept that has a more specific significance than the word used in the English version of the survey.

### Consider differences in cultural concepts

In a section intended to measure food insecurity and nutrition, cognitive interviews revealed that the **concept of skipping meals was not well understood** by respondents. The question was thus adapted from asking whether a child has breakfast, lunch and dinner every day to asking whether a child is “eating much less than usual.”



Photo by Andy Olsen/NWHCM Staff





Photo by Breezy Baldwin

## Find compatible communication methods

A question to caregivers about the **amount of time their child spends on different daily activities** (such as school, play time, studying outside of school, chores, caring for family members, family business/farming, or work for pay) posed difficulties for both children and adult respondents, suggesting that quantifying specific amounts of time is not an effective way to communicate in this context.

In sections geared to assess social and emotional skills as well as school environment, **children struggled when asked to count out beans** to represent the number of times that something happened, such as how many times they were nice to others or how many times children at school get into physical fights. This suggests that the method was not compatible with the ways that children communicate in this context.

## Recognize cross-cultural applicability

**Sometimes a tool anticipated to raise issues ends up working well.** Teachers were able to answer questions about their students' social and emotional skills even though there was a concern that the US-developed tool might not translate well to the school context in Haiti, where class sizes are larger and teacher-student relationships differ.

Although interviewers were trained to defer to the respondents' preferred meeting location, most interviews occurred at the school campus. This speaks to the strong relationship between the school community and parents.



Photo by Evan Carter



# The way forward

Photo by Breezy Baldwin

**Learning assessment in Haiti** currently focuses on literacy and numeracy outcomes, rather than key aspects of child development and learning, such as socioemotional competencies and socio-ecological influences outside the classroom (child health, household economic status, and community factors).

## Ensuring a whole-child, whole-community approach to education in Haiti

The Fostering Resilience Initiative works alongside ACE Haiti to measure these non-traditional factors, generating important insights for educators and policymakers seeking to develop whole-child, whole-community interventions.

## Three assessment tools adapted to Haitian context

Three separate measurement tools were identified and adapted to inform the development of an innovative socio-emotional learning curriculum for early-grade primary school students in Haiti.

The three adapted tools will be used to understand:

1. Haitian students' baseline social and emotional skills in 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade;

2. School environments and their conduciveness to children's social and emotional development;
3. How the newly implemented social and emotional programs are working; and
4. Students' family and community contexts, and how these contexts impact students' social and emotional learning.

The focus is on situating the child in his or her broader social, environmental, and economic context to provide practical information that will be useful to decision-makers, program implementers, and policy-makers. The long-term vision is a whole-child, whole-community approach to education in Haiti so that children and their communities can thrive.



UN Photo/Marco Dormino



# fostering **RESILIENCE** initiative

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