

Issue 22

STREET LIFE

“BEING INVOLVED IN THE
PROJECT MAKES ME FEEL
THAT I AM NOT ALONE”

Catalina from Bolivia

*Discover how you're helping transform
children's emotional wellbeing*

Stories in this issue:

- Unlocking potential in India: How counselling changes children's lives
- The impact of being heard: Meet Catalina in Bolivia



WELCOME

It's increasingly clear how deeply mental health affects every aspect of our lives. For street children facing constant instability, healthy wellbeing is crucial. Many have suffered trauma and continue to face daily challenges. Supporting these children and young adults to manage and maintain healthy wellbeing is imperative to giving them every opportunity for life in all its fullness.

In this issue, we highlight how our projects support children's emotional wellbeing; from providing essential support, such as safe spaces or counselling, to interventions that break the cycles of violence and harmful coping mechanisms children are caught up in. Parenting workshops also equip caregivers with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to create supportive home environments.

Last year, we conducted our first wellbeing survey with children and young people from projects in El Salvador, India, and Guatemala. We wanted to hear directly about the impact of our work on their overall wellbeing.

The results were encouraging given the daily challenges and uncertainties they face:

25% reported a **significant improvement** in wellbeing

50% stated their **wellbeing had improved** in the past year

87% expressed having **hope for the future**



Because of you, hope is possible

These interventions don't just change lives in the short term – they lay the foundation for a stable and more hopeful future. With your support, children are rebuilding confidence, rediscovering their worth, and believing in themselves again.

We couldn't do this without you. Your kindness and commitment is giving children and young people the tools to overcome trauma, grow in confidence and have hope for the future. Thank you for standing with us in our mission to change the world for street children.



Lynne Morris OBE
CEO of Toybox



SUPPORTING PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

in El Salvador

Locally run 'positive parenting' workshops aim to equip parents and caregivers with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to create a nurturing, stable, and supportive home environment for their children. Sessions cover topics such as child rights and protection, parental responsibilities, discipline without violence, and managing stress and emotions. Morelia, mother of eight-year-old Kevin, says:

"I have learned to control myself more, it has helped me a lot in my relationship with my son."

THE IMPACT OF BEING HEARD

in La Paz, Bolivia

Catalina spent over a decade living on the streets after her family broke down. "Everything started when my parents separated. I lived with my father, and he used to beat me a lot."

Hoping for a fresh start, Catalina moved to La Paz to live with her mother, but their relationship remained strained. "I ended up on the streets, taking refuge drinking with my friends." For years, life on the streets exposed Catalina to both physical and emotional risks.

Everything changed after the birth of her second child, Marcos. Determined to build a better future, she joined a Toybox-supported project run by local partner Alalay.

Before she became involved with the project she recalls feeling fearful and insecure, convinced no one loved her because she'd never received the affection she longed for as a child.

Catalina received psychological support and help securing ID documents for her son; "As I got to know the project, I felt a bit more at ease. I could try and talk to someone – express how I really felt – and I felt supported. It makes me feel that I am not alone, that I can move forward and be a better mother. I want to be well, stable, and calm, without worrying that tomorrow I will have nothing or be like I was before – thinking that nobody wanted me."



HELPING CHILDREN OVERCOME TRAUMA

in Guatemala

In Guatemala, many children experience mental health challenges, often due to substance abuse, family rejection, trauma and the conditions they face living on the streets.

Our local partners run mental health workshops and collaborate with experienced counsellors to support children and caregivers to tackle negative cycles of behaviour and action.

They also deliver vital street outreach work – providing a listening ear to street children and young people. For many, it's the first time they've received emotional support or felt able to trust an adult. This trust is essential in supporting them to learn how to process emotions and access the support they need to heal and thrive.

HOW COUNSELLING CHANGES LIVES

in India

"Counselling and guidance is central to my role. Many children experience difficult circumstances, and require emotional support. Their lives are filled with struggles and hardships, which often lead to a lack of confidence, fear, and a sense of insecurity.

"Counselling boosts self-confidence, helps children understand their emotions and brings about positive life changes. It empowers them to fight for their rights and ask questions. Often, it prevents future mistakes. Counselling can be incredibly beneficial for any child or parent who needs guiding through a difficult situation.

"Every child has a hidden talent, they just need someone to recognise it, provide guidance, and show love. By listening to them, understanding their emotions, providing support, and creating a positive, safe, environment, they too can achieve their dreams."



Doli, an Educator for CHETNA in India

Reflection on

SUPPORTING CHILDREN TO OVERCOME BARRIERS AND REBUILD THEIR FUTURES

by Graeme Everist, Toybox's Director of Finance and Resources



“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” – Jeremiah 29 v11

Recently, I fixed a beautiful, old wall in my garden that was overwhelmed by ivy. Firstly, I cut back the bushes, then I removed the mass of matted tendrils, carefully avoiding displacing stones or losing too much of the crumbling mortar. Finally, in order to make the wall strong and enduring, I removed the waste and mended the holes (sometimes craters) left behind.

The process brought to mind the outstanding work Toybox partners do daily to help street children. Although the children are visible, there are many invisible barriers to reaching them. Many are wary and untrusting, having been let down by adults often before.

Our partners show limitless perseverance building relationships with vulnerable young people and, once trust is established, they are able to help them start to cast off the baggage that can suffocate their curiosity, creativity and playfulness.

At the core of all of our projects we seek to allow young people to take control of their own futures and wellbeing. It's often a long process as we strive to overcome systemic and structural barriers which complicate the rebuilding process, however the compassion and continued kindness from people like you means that day by day, brick by brick, the foundations of safe and hopeful futures are being laid.



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