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I AM here because I've been working towards it for many years. I guess I made it thanks to my persistence, tenacity, concentration or perhaps my stubbornness.

— Russian boy

Context and risk factors

MOSCOW is the capital city of the world's largest country, Russia, which spans 11 time zones and borders 14 countries. Although the population of the Russian Federation declines each year, due to low birth rates and high death rates¹; Moscow has a very high population growth rate, largely due to migration. In fact, Moscow is the most populous city in Europe, with a population of 10,407,000 people. Since Russia's transition from the Soviet system to a free-market economy, the gap between rich and poor has significantly increased and corruption in government and business has become

notorious. The education system, traditionally of high standards and currently with 93% enrollment, is under financed and a major concern. Still, the adult literacy rate is 99%.² In 2002, approximately 25% of Russia's population lived below the poverty level; this figure rose significantly in families with children.

Russia has no national youth policy. In 2004, over 500,000 children were in state-care, attributed in part to alarming domestic violence rates, increased abandonment, and orphaning.

In Moscow, thousands of youth are homeless and vulnerable to exploitation and prostitution.

HIV/AIDS is a rapidly growing epidemic, but the actual number of individuals infected is unknown due to stigmatization.³ Other risk factors faced by youth in Moscow include: poor health and communicable diseases, sexual and physical violence, high rates of suicide, and malnutrition. Despite cultural, political, and economic disintegration in Moscow, the IRP learned that youth have relied on persistence and consistency to achieve their goals and overcome adversity.

Participants: Of the 82 youth that participated in the study from Russia, 48% (39) were female and 52% (43) were male. The average age of the participants was 15 years, ranging from ages 11 to 27. Most of the youth who participated were in grade 11, but education levels of the participants ranged from grades 5 to 1⁴. The communities of the participants saw the youth as coping well, based on culturally appropriate norms for behavior.

What does resilience mean in Moscow?:

In each site, qualitative interviews, consisting of nine 'catalyst' questions, were conducted with youth considered by the community to be 'coping well with adversity.' In Moscow, 2 girls and 2 boys spoke to us about the meaning of resilience in their context. They described how continued persistence in the face of cultural disintegration and chaos was helping them to achieve their goals. Russian youth told us for example:

"Well, I know that even if it is hard on me now, it will be easier on me later on. I try to keep it in mind that even if things are hard on me now, I'll be able to relax later on. The point is that I already had a great time... So, I remember how I enjoyed myself then and what a great time I had when these problems weren't there. I can chide myself for not getting everything straightened out in due time. Then I sit and think: "Well, you've made this mess, so you've got to clear it now. You cannot unmake it, so you've got to buckle down to it. There is no turning back." Then I gradually find a way out." (Russian girl)

"I am here because I've been working towards it for many years. And it takes me a long time. I guess I made it thanks to my persistence, tenacity, concentration or perhaps my stubbornness. (Russian boy)



WHAT is the International Resilience Project (IRP)?:

The IRP is a mixed-methods, culturally sensitive approach to understanding how youth around the world effectively cope with the diverse challenges they face. The IRP now has partnerships with researchers and community-based organizations on six continents in over 25 communities. The IRP is currently bringing to a close the first three-year phase of research, in which data was collected with over 1500 children in 14 communities worldwide. Moscow, Russia was one of those communities. Youth there told us how they manage to survive and thrive despite prolonged political, economic and social turmoil and transition.

For further information:

For a full discussion of the *International Resilience Project*, please see the accompanying Project Report contained with this package or visit us at our website www.resilienceproject.org

For copies of this report, please contact:

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Studying Resilience:

An international team of researchers created the content for the **Child and Youth Resilience Measure (CYRM)**, a 58-item instrument administered across all 14 research-sites. Local research teams also added 15 contextually and culturally specific questions to the CYRM during its administration in their communities. Questions were scored from 1 (do not at all agree) to 5 (agree a lot) by the youth themselves.

Sample of Russia CYRM Mean Scores

(Highest, lowest, and largest variance when compared to overall CYRM mean)

Order	CYRM Question listed by Mean Score	Site mean	Global mean	Variance	Color codes
1	Do you think non-prescription drugs and/or alcohol will help you when you have to deal with lots of problems? (CYRM 33) Reversed scored	4.8	3.9	0.9	■
2	Is getting an education important to you? (CYRM 10)	4.7	4.4	0.3	■
3	Do you feel safe when you are with your family? (CYRM 48)	4.2	4.1	0.1	■
4	Do you need to cooperate with people around you if you want to succeed? (CYRM 8)	4.2	3.8	0.4	■
5	Do you have opportunities to develop job skills that will be useful later in life? (CYRM 50)	4.1	3.6	0.5	■
6	Can you openly disagree with your parent(s) and elders when you believe things different from what they believe? (CYRM 55)	3.9	3.4	0.5	■
7	Do you know where to go in your community to get help? (CYRM 35)	3.9	3.4	0.5	■
8	Do you think that you are at least as good (or better) than other youth you know? (CYRM 58)	3.7	3.2	0.5	■
9	Do you feel confident when you are in challenging and confusing situations? (CYRM 16)	2.9	3.3	-0.4	■
10	Does your family or community encourage non-violent solutions to deal with somebody who commits a crime? (CYRM 54)	2.9	3.2	-0.3	■
11	Do you feel that your parent(s) watch you closely and know a lot about you? (CYRM 20)	2.5	3.4	-0.9	■
12	Does your family have a ritual or routine around mealtimes? (CYRM 19)	2.5	2.9	-0.4	■
13	Do you participate in organized religious activities? (CYRM 46)	2.1	2.7	-0.6	■
Overall Mean across 58 CYRM questions		3.5	3.4	0.1	

■ Highest Site Scores on CYRM ■ Largest Variance Below Global Mean (-)
 ■ Lowest Site Scores on CYRM ■ Largest Variance Above Global Mean (+)

Russia CYRM Results:

■ Across all 58 measures of the CYRM, Russia's mean (3.5 out of a possible 5) was slightly higher than the global sample mean (3.4/5). Within the Russian sample however, youth placed particular importance (or scored themselves highest) on CYRM statements: 33 'Do you think non-prescription drugs and/or alcohol will help you when you have to deal with lots of problems?'; 10 'Is getting an education important to you?'; 48 'Do you feel safe when you are with your family?'; and 8 'Do you need to cooperate with people around you if you want to succeed?' It is important to note that CYRM Question 33 is reverse scored. A high-score indicates that youth **do not** think non-prescription drugs and/or alcohol will help when they have to deal with lots of problems.

■ Russian youth gave their lowest scores to questions: 54 'Does your family or community encourage non-violent solutions to deal with somebody who commits a crime?'; 20 'Do you feel that your parent(s) watch you closely and know a lot about you?'; 19 'Does your family have a ritual or routine around mealtimes?'; 46 'Do you participate in organized religious activities?'

■ When compared to the global sample, Russian youth showed the most **positive variance** (scoring higher than the overall mean for youth globally) on questions 50, 'Do you have opportunities to develop job skills that will be useful later in life?'; 55 'Can you openly disagree with your parent(s) and elders when you believe things different from what they believe?'; 35 'Do you know where to go in your community to get help?'; and 58 'Do you think that you are at least as good (or better) than other youth you know?'

■ When compared to the global sample, Russian youth showed the largest **negative variance** (scoring lower than the overall mean for youth globally) on questions 16, 'Do you feel confident when you are in challenging and confusing situations?'; 20 'Do you feel that your parent(s) watch you closely and know a lot about you?'; 19 'Does your family have a ritual or routine around mealtimes?'; and 46 'Do you participate in organized religious activities?'

Russia Site Specific Question Mean Scores

Site Specific Questions	Mean/5
SSQ 5: Do you feel the warmth of the relatives in your house is not the only place for sleep?	4.2
SSQ 1: Do you think that everything depends on you?	4.0
SSQ 10: Do you feel needed by your family members and peers (1 for family and 5 for peers)	3.9
SSQ 7: Do you think that you will be self-fulfilled in the future?	3.9
SSQ 2: Do you like your country (culture) where you are living?	3.8
SSQ 6: Do you have the possibility to get the education that you want to have?	3.8
SSQ 15: Are you certain about your future profession?	3.7
SSQ 12: Do your parents know when you feel bad?	3.4
SSQ 14: Do you consider the members of your family to be guides for you in your life?	3.3
SSQ 11: Do you think that youth in your country have enough options for leisure?	2.7
SSQ 9: Are you afraid to be addicted to drugs (alcohol)?	2.7
SSQ 3: Do you think that your friends have a positive attitude toward alcohol?	2.7
SSQ 8: Does your family's economic and social background influence your peer's attitudes toward you?	2.6
SSQ 13: Do you feel safe in your country?	2.6
SSQ 4: Do you support the skinhead at least as an idea?	1.6

Russian youth scored a mean of 3.3 out of a possible 5 across all site-specific questions, which was slightly lower than their overall mean on the 58 globally administered CYRM questions (3.5/5).

Understanding the Results "Ecologically":

The IRP team reached a consensus that the 58 global CYRM questions could be separated into four unique and important aspects of resilience: *individual traits and characteristics, relationship factors, community contexts, and social and political aspects of culture*. Of the 58 CYRM questions, 23 related to individual traits and characteristics, 7 related to relationship factors, 15 to community contexts, and 12 related to aspects of culture. Focus on these four areas of resilience shows us which aspects are most relevant to children's success in difficult contexts. One can see from the chart below which aspects of resilience are more or less important to Russian youth when compared to youth across all 14 research-sites.

Four-part Ecological Model:

Gender Comparison of Russian Site Means with Overall Sample Means (All Sites)

Ecological Model (Aspects of Resilience)	Site	Global	Girls		Boys	
			Russia	Global	Russia	Global
Individual Aspects	3.5	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.5	3.4
Relationship Aspects	3.3	3.4	3.3	3.5	3.4	3.3
Community Aspects	3.7	3.6	3.7	3.6	3.7	3.5
Culture Aspects	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.4	3.3

Endnotes

- Javeline, D. (May, 2004). Political Passivity and Russia's Health Crisis (Occasional Paper #287). Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Retrieved from Website: <http://wwics.si.edu/topics/pubs/OP287.pdf>
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- Russian Federation Background. Unicef. Retrieved from Unicef Website: http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/russia_background.html
- Context and risk factors provided by IRP site partners at the Institute of Psychology, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia