



U.S. Government Evidence Summit on Protecting Children Outside of Family Care

Focal Question Two:

What are the most effective systems/strategies/interventions to assess and address the immediate needs of children outside of family care?

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Introduction

- Paucity of evidence but much experience
- Ethical and technical limits for research
- Diversity of children living out of family care beyond silos
- and contexts...



Methodology. The process

- 4 Vulnerability cohorts: separated and unaccompanied children in emergencies; children in institutional care; street children and child-headed households; and children who are trafficked or in child labor
- Policy and practice guidance employed by operational actors are addressed first, followed by research and research gaps
- Answering the question is a question?



Prevention

- Insufficient evidence on the root causes of child-family separations and how to prevent them; livelihood strategies
- Interventions that build on existing household livelihood strategies when mothers are direct beneficiaries (MkNelly & McCord, 2002; MkNelly & Dunford, 1996)
- Poverty as a major cause, but practitioners working to reduce child vulnerability and those engaged in economic development remain separate (James-Wilson & Torres, 2008)

Prevention

- A key prevention-related research question is how early interventions can mitigate stressors on families and strengthen their extended support systems
- Research on how to effectively integrate child protection and child participation into livelihood strengthening programs, and the scale up, is a priority (Chaffin, 2011)
- Research of cash transfer programs on family separation prevention





Separated and unaccompanied children in emergencies

- Separated and unaccompanied children 3-5% of war-related population displacements since the Spanish Civil War (Ressler, et al., 1988)
- Child protection in emergencies relies on NGO and UN guidelines and good practices tools. *The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)*
- Children living with family members fare better (Hobfoll et al., 2007); distinct needs and challenges, but not always uniformly at greater risk for some adverse outcomes (Shepler, 2005). Child soldiers miss key lifecycle milestones (Betancourt et al., 2008)
- Promoting a sense of safety, normalcy, sense of self- and community efficacy, connectedness and hope (Hobfoll et al., 2007)



Separated and unaccompanied children in emergencies

- Family Tracing and Reunification programs are effective and priority. BUT identification and prevention (secondary separation) remains a challenge. Operational challenges...
- Restoration of education and the school community is essential (Hobfoll et al., 2007). Child Friendly Spaces (Kostelny & Wessells, 2008)
- Gender distinctions (i.e. female adolescents)
- Research needs... i.e. Evidence base on efficacious psychosocial interventions is weak (Jordans et al., 2006); prevention and secondary separation; CFS, etc.





Children in institutional care

- Family-based alternative care, when well implemented, is preferable to institutional care for their long-term development and social integration (Williamson, 2004). But residential care centers grow in emergencies times (Greenwell, 2002; The IRC, Gov of Burundi, & UNICEF, 2011)
- Bucharest Early Intervention Project
- Improve centers (expensive) or support families?
- Figures are a problem and obstacle for reform...



Children in institutional care

- Well-designed residential care may have a role in providing interim care, i.e. child soldiers reintegration (Boothby, Crawford, & Halperin, 2006; Brooks, 2005)
- Children have parents. Some biological and adoptive families do need help to care for their children (Wilson, 2003)
- Research needs: consequences of institutionalization (and deinstitutionalization options) for children all ages and contexts; persistence of institutionalized care → help countries with evidence to implement *The UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children (2009)*





Street children and child-headed households

- Need to be strengthen...
- An increasing number of children are being forced to the streets as a result of poverty, abuse, conflict, trafficking, and HIV/AIDS (Gurung, 2004). Socioeconomic aspects of poverty and social exclusion: family dysfunction; high failure rates in school; and, child/adolescent labor (Filho, 2001)... but they have families!
- Need first to understand the reasons for a particular child-headed household and ensure that they do not disrupt support being provided by the extended family or community (Luzze, 2002; Germann, 2005)
- There are some innovative assessment approaches that including children in designing and conducting the research (Save the Children, 2006)





Children who are trafficked or in child labor

- 215 million child labor, of which 115 million hazardous work (ILO-IPEC, 2010). 1,800,000 in prostitution or pornography and 1,100,000 children are in forced labor as a result of trafficking (ILO, 2002)
- Operational guidance: child labor (ILO, 2002); for assisting trafficked victims (IOM, 2007); reintegration of child soldiers (Paris Principles and Commitments 2007). Rigorous and sensitive quantitative studies complement the information derived from guidance documents, as well as agency reports and qualitative studies.
- Community participation, child-centered holistic, contextually grounded approaches;



Children who are trafficked or in child labor

- Government engagement essential → build upon indigenous resources and avoids Western trauma model (Bracken, 1996; Stark, Boothby, & Ager, 2009) (Wallis & Dukay, 2009)
- Research needs: studies with comparison measures and larger sample sizes (and power calculations) to verify guidance assumptions and program effectiveness determinations; outcome studies on informal fosterage systems and critical analysis of outcomes of children formally and informally placed in foster families; enforcement and training programs for police and inspectors at borders and immigration offices to address trafficking and child migration