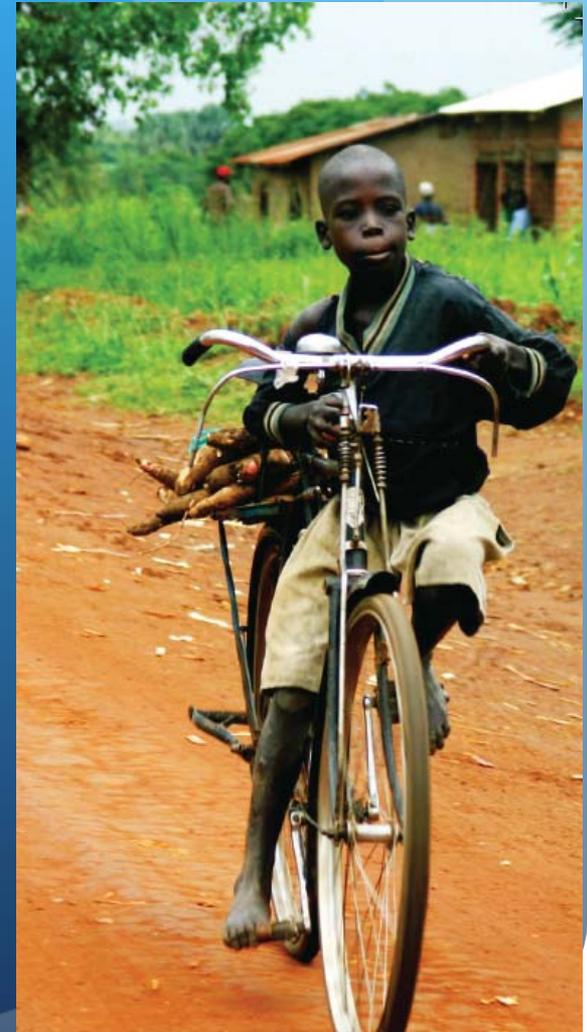


The magnitude and multi-dimensionality of children's vulnerability

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- 17.8 million children have lost both parents
- 1.8 million children are victims of sex trafficking or in pornography
- 1.1 million children are trafficked for forced labor
- Close to half of the 1.4 billion people who live in income poverty are children
- In lower and middle income countries, about 200 million children under five are not attaining their developmental potential



The long-term effects of adverse childhood experiences: interplay of risks and protective factors

- Risks can be mitigated by sustained care in a protective family or access to family reunification/adoption/*kafala*
- Children who are abandoned, abused, or severely neglected can face significant life cycle risks that are costly to society
- Investments in early childhood, have been associated with a reduction in infant and child mortality, grade repetition, future criminal activity, drug abuse, pregnancy, and use of social services
- Investments in early childhood are extremely cost-effective



Moving from silos to systems

- Child vulnerabilities are multi-dimensional, yet global programs are fragmented
- Child protection is a sector in its own right, but to protect children effectively, it must be closely linked with other sectors
- There is an opportunity to build on burgeoning country efforts, with a recent but rapidly spreading country focus on child protection systems development in numerous low to middle income countries



The architecture of U.S. Government assistance to highly vulnerable children



- Solid work: \$2.62 billion last fiscal year
- Programs are fragmented by:
 - Legislation
 - Agency mandates
- Interventions targeting vulnerable children tend to focus on addressing the needs of children according to their vulnerability rather than building systems that effectively address the needs of all vulnerable children.
- At present, the U.S. government's foreign assistance program does not have a singular bureaucratic home for vulnerable children or child protection programming





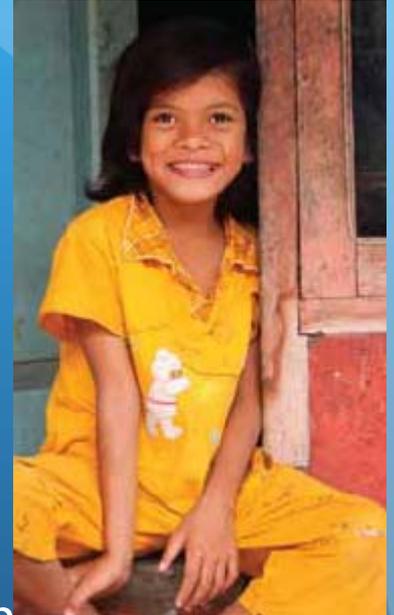
The state of the evidence-base: We know what we don't know

- We lack basic, formative data in most LMICs:
- Living Standards Measurement Surveys, Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), and Multiple Indicators Cluster Surveys (MICS) do not yield information relevant to children outside of the household unless they are specifically designed to do so
- Promising measurement and investigative initiatives are emerging:
 - Bucharest Early Intervention Project
 - UNICEF/CDC and Columbia University/CDC studies on violence against children
 - Government lead Childhood Violence Prevalence Surveys in Uganda and Indonesia
- There is a need for studies with better comparison groups and larger sample sizes produced through more rigorous power size calculation in order to verify that the differences in sub-groups of vulnerable children can rightly be attributed to a true variation rather than random chance.

The state of the evidence-base: Investing in learning

- Only a small proportion of funding for programs for children living outside of family care is devoted to research.
- A lack of sufficient funding for research and development contributes to the shortage of empirical evidence
- Assuming that there is agreement that a stronger base needs to be developed, a fundamental question that follows is:

What percentage of U.S. government foreign assistance targeted to children outside of family care should go directly to project beneficiaries vs. research to show impact or to help develop the design of future programs?



The state of the evidence-base: Developing an appropriate research framework



- Various methods of assessing quality of evidence regarding effectiveness of interventions exist
- The National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators has a 6-level system for assessing evidence based practice:
 1. well supported, efficacious practice,
 2. supported and probably efficacious practice,
 3. supported and acceptable practice,
 4. promising and acceptable practice,
 5. innovative or novel practice, and
 6. concerning practice.
- A similar system could be applied to interventions for children out of family care to clarify if what is being proposed to meet a need fits into the state of evidence.



The state of the evidence-base: Developing an appropriate research framework

- Longer-term effects of interventions are poorly documented
- Challenges include how to determine if a project has potential to advance knowledge and how to sustain effective interventions
- These challenges should become goals and priorities for funding



The state of the evidence-base: Developing an appropriate research framework



- Researchers have described a cumulative risk model, in which the number of risk factors are most predictive of outcomes
- The more research can map risk factors and developmental assets, the closer it will come to providing guidance for programs and policies
- Research in low and middle income countries might accordingly benefit from the examination of multiple risk factors.



The state of the evidence-base: Connecting research, practice and policy

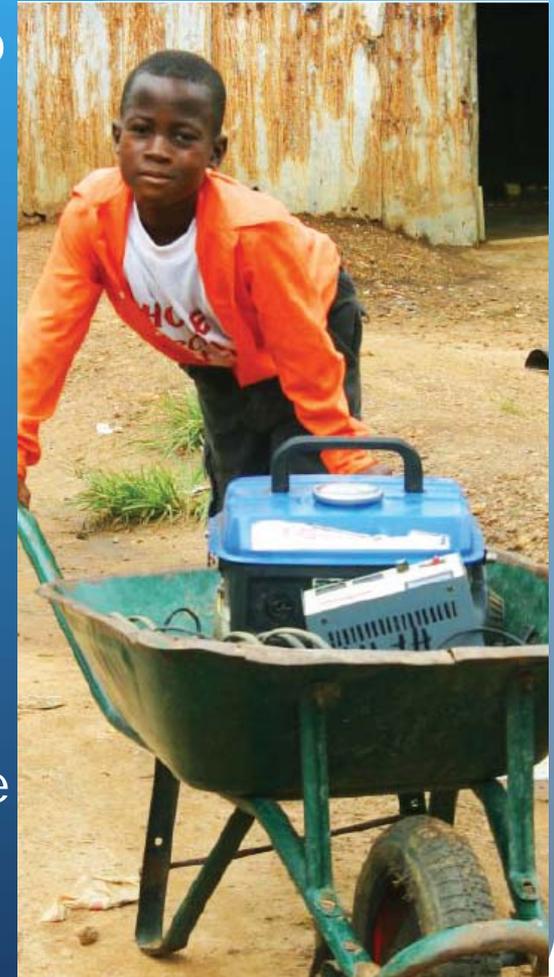
- An implication of the ecological perspective is that the relationship between policy and research is not unidirectional
- Good theory and research can generate hypotheses which are translated into settings where developmental processes and child outcomes can be observed.



The state of the evidence-base: Connecting research, practice and policy

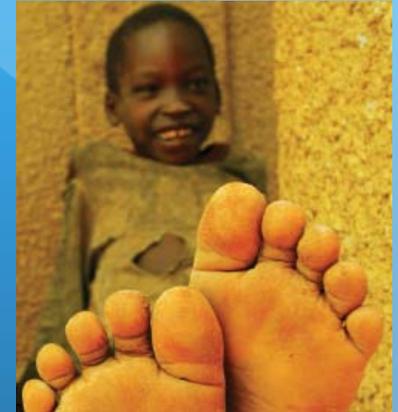


- Once contexts are identified, it is important to conduct longitudinal studies to assess the developmental pathways of vulnerable children outside family care.
- Where “universal” effects are observed they should become the focal point for on-going research to assess the development of vulnerable children outside family care.
- While a variety of ‘macro’ level factors have been attributed for why children are outside of family care in LMIC our understanding of the limited at best.



Ethical considerations

- International research with children living outside family care in low and middle income countries raises complex ethical issues
- Challenges arise from the international context and the vulnerability of the study population
- Research with children outside family care in LMIC must comply with international standards for human subject research and additional guidelines against exploitation of abandoned children
- This requires careful attention to both context and power relations.
- The population must gain from the research results

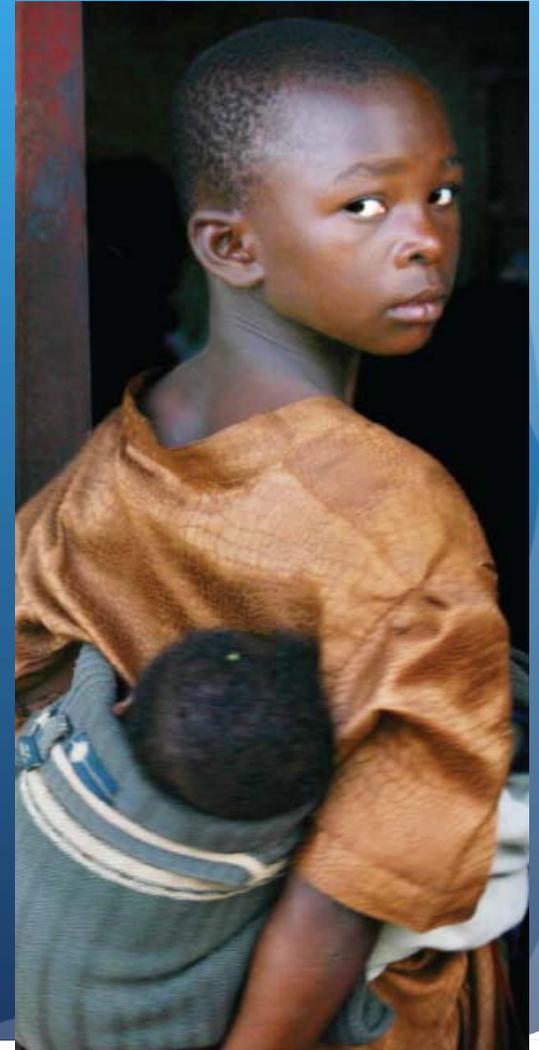


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Ethical considerations: Do no harm—Principle of non-maleficence

- Research may harm children living outside family care in a myriad of ways, such as:

1. *Labeling;*
2. *Inappropriate research designs and methodologies;*
3. *Raised expectations;*
4. *Deficits approaches; and*
5. *Imposition*





Ethical considerations: *Research agendas and power*

- An important question is who defines the research agenda.
- Often it is those in the global North. This approach marginalizes technical experts and policy leaders in the global South
- To respect the principle of justice, an ethical priority is to systematically include voices from low and middle income countries in defining research agendas



Ethical considerations: *Moving forward with caution and guidance*

- Concern over causing harm should not paralyze research.
- Many interventions are based on practitioner expertise rather than independent scientific evidence → this raises the question of whether it is ethical to use unproven interventions that provide only low levels of accountability.
- To make practice accountable not only to donors but also to affected people it is imperative to conduct operations research and use it to strengthen humanitarian practice





Ethical considerations: *Moving forward with caution and guidance*

- Protection of human subjects in federally funded research is a matter of law in the U.S. (45CFR Part 46).
- Building upon NIH guidelines, numerous guidelines are available that enable ethical practice in the conduct of research with children
 - (e.g. Schenck & Williamson, 2005, Inter-agency Working Group on Unaccompanied and Separated Children, 2004).
 - The Council for the International Organizations of Medical Sciences (CIOMS, 2002) address ethical issues for human subjects research on a global basis.
 - The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child



Capacity development and knowledge transfer

- A capacity building approach:
 - Trains and mentors national researchers
 - Develops internal capacities for intervention research,
 - Institutionalizes the resulting learning, and
 - Enables long-term, sustainable approaches that improves the well-being of children living outside family care.
- An important part of capacity building is to engage children and young people as researchers





Capacity development and knowledge transfer

- Engagement of universities and national researchers in low and middle income countries is a key component of an integrated knowledge transfer model
- Supporting the participation of national researchers in operational research and enhancing their research capacities is a further priority activity
- The development of university program curriculums to enhance the knowledge and skill sets of current and future practitioners is also required

Recommendations

- Moving forward, it is important to consider how current operational contexts, collaborative relationships and learning-knowledge can be united.
- The strategy to be developed as a result of this Evidence Summit should be the learning arm of an operational leadership initiative.



Recommendations

Priorities :

1. Define an interagency research agenda on children outside of family care as a first step towards defining a broader research agenda on child protection in LMIC.
2. Ensure that defined priority research areas are adequately funded according to benchmarks and monitor interagency funding devoted to research on children in adversity in LMIC over time.
3. Adhere to clear ethical guidelines for research.
4. Establish a long-term and focused effort to develop integrated knowledge transfer mechanisms in developing and middle income countries and promote partnerships between universities, researchers, policy makers, and civil society.

