

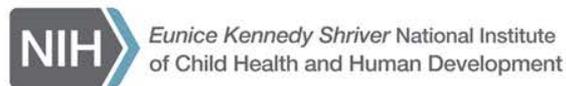
Facilitating Optimal Developmental Outcomes for Children Living Outside of Family Care

IOM Forum, “Investing in Young Children Globally”

Prague, Czech Republic, November 2-4, 2015

Vesna Kutlesic, Ph.D.

Director, Office of Global Health





Children and Families in Crisis

- Orphans and separated children, while living in their families, are often exposed to poverty, stigma, lack of educational resources, and exposure to physical and sexual violence (Morantz et al., 2013; Cluver et al., 2012).
- When these children are left without the care of their parents and families, they are vulnerable to further harm.
- Are these children “damaged” by exposure to adversity in their families, or later “damaged” during their separation from their families in subsequent institutional, foster care, or adoptive placements?
- Do these children show signs of resilience or improvement in their health and development with health, education, and psychosocial service interventions?



Children and Families in Crisis

- Low and middle income countries (LMICs) are home to an estimated 132 million single and double orphans, 95% of whom are over age 5 yrs (World Bank Group, 2013; UNICEF, 2008, 2006).
- Additionally, tens of millions of street children are in need of care, with numbers increasing in several countries (UNICEF, 2009).
- More than 2 million children live in institutions around the globe (UNICEF, 2009).
- Caring for these children presents a complex problem that demands evidence-based solutions, a continuum of care, and placements for children with a diverse set of health, education, and psychosocial needs.



Trends in Child Development Outcomes with Institutional and Family-Based Care

- Each model of care has been shown to have strengths and weaknesses, a primary goal is protecting children from further trauma and abuse regardless of placement setting (e.g., institutional care vs. family-based).
- For infants under age 2, research has focused largely on infants cared for in large hospital-style institutions that employ shift workers (Bucharest Early Intervention Project, St. Petersburg-USA Orphanage Research Team).
- These studies have demonstrated powerful negative effects on the infant brain and child development.
- When these infants were later placed with trained, paid, and supervised foster parents, some brain and child development improvements have been observed, others appear irreversible.



Trends in Child Development Outcomes with Institutional and Family-Based Care

- Other studies have found more nuanced outcomes, particularly among children over age five and in low income countries (Merz et al., 2013).
- The Positive Outcomes for Orphans (POFO) Study (Whetten et al., 2014) examined developmental outcomes of children residing in institutions and family-based settings in Cambodia, Ethiopia, Kenya, India, and Tanzania.
- They found that children age 5 or older living in institutional settings scored as well as or better than those in family-based settings across a number of measures of physical and emotional well-being. This does not suggest institutions are preferred over families for children over age 5 yrs.
- Rather, quality of care is an essential consideration regardless of placement setting (e.g., institutional or family-based).



Panel on Children Living Outside of Family Care

- **Kevin Browne**, Director, Centre for Forensic and Family Psychology, Nottingham University
- **Anne Berens**, Julius B. Richmond Fellow, Harvard University
- **Irina Malanciuc**, Country Director, Lumos Foundation Moldova
- **Katerina Slesingerova**, Head, Department for Family, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Czech Republic