Second Round Table Meeting of Experts on Strengthening Global and National Data on Children’s Care through the DHS and MICS Surveys

4-5th February 2019, New York, USA
Critical importance of family and a family environment for child development and well-being (Ainsworth and Bowlby, 1965; Bowlby, 1982; Schoenmaker et al, 2014).


Negative impact of emotional deprivation and institutionalization for younger children in Central and Eastern Europe (Fox et al., 2011; Johnson and Gunnar, 2011; Nelson et al., 2012, Berens & Nelson, 2015).

Growth in use of residential care for children in LMICS but also HICS in Europe (Carter, 2005; Browne, 2009; Williamson and Greenberg, 2009; www.bettercarenetwork.org).
The ‘Orphanhood’ Literature

  - Estimated 43 million orphaned children in sub-Saharan Africa, 12.3 million because of AIDS
  - Need for ‘True orphan’ prevalence (paternal, maternal and double) (Belsey & Sherr, 2011)

- Number of studies looked at ‘orphanhood’ and relationship to certain well-being indicators (schooling, health care, poverty) using national household surveys, including DHS and MICS
  - A number of studies found children who are orphaned are less likely to be enrolled in school (Bicego, Rustein & Johnson, 2003), but others showed poverty and gender more closely linked, separate from orphan status (Campbell et al 2010)
  - Others found little evidence that OVC are disadvantaged in health, nutritional status, and health care compared to non-OVC (Mishra & Bignami-Van Assche, 2008)
  - Some evidence that outcomes for orphans depend on the relatedness of orphans to their household heads “Hamilton Rule” (Case, Paxson & Ableidinger, 2004)
  - **Analysis of living arrangements and changes in child care patterns** in low HIV/AIDS prevalence countries needed (Beegle, Filmer, Stokes & Tiererova, 2010)
Redefining Childhood Vulnerability

- **UNICEF: Measuring the determinants of childhood vulnerability** (Idele, Suzuki et al, April 2014)
  - Explored the utility of existing markers of child vulnerability based on UNICEF and UNAIDS definition of a child made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS (11 countries, DHS and MICS)
  - “household wealth, a child’s living arrangements, and household adult education emerged as the most powerful and consistent factors associated with key health and social outcomes of child vulnerability” p.3
  - Living arrangement is a strong marker of wellbeing, independent of orphanhood status; Children living with those other than their parents fare worse on almost every outcome.

- Pullum (2015): Used data from 80 Surveys (DHS and MICS) covering 70 countries to estimate prevalence of the 4 UNICEF components and combinations of vulnerability
The family being the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth, well-being and protection of children, efforts should primarily be directed to enabling the child to remain in or return to the care of his/her parents, or when appropriate, other close family members. The State should ensure that families have access to forms of support in the caregiving role. The UN CRC and the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children (2009) II. A.3.

States should pursue policies that address the root causes of child abandonment, relinquishment and separation of the child from his/her family … (by ensuring the right to birth registration, access to adequate housing and to basic health, education and social welfare services, measures to combat discrimination, violence, child maltreatment etc.) Guidelines IV.A.32

Children with disabilities have equal rights with respect to family life. UN CRPD Article 23
Focus of international and national interventions on care

- Strengthening the capacity of parents and families to care
- Preventing child-family separation
- Reintegrating children into safe and nurturing families
- Providing a continuum of appropriate alternative care options
Other international policies and standards

- SDGs (2015)
- Global Compact on Migration (2018)
- Global Compact on Refugees (2018)
- European Commission’s 2013 Recommendation on Investing in Children
- Growing bilateral donor commitments (DFAT, DIFID…)
States need better data on children’s care and factors associated with child/ family separation

- Strengthening data collection systems on children outside of family care
- Strengthening data collection systems on children in ‘care vulnerable situations’/ at risk of separation in family care

Making better use of existing national household surveys, in particular DHS and MICS, but also other relevant data sets (i.e. census data etc.)
What do we know about who cares for children from DHS/MICS data?
Prevalence of children under 15 living with both parents:

- Afghanistan 95.5%
- Lebanon 94.7%
- Jordan 94.5%
- Macedonia 94.3%
- Egypt 94.2%
- Swaziland: 22.5%
- Namibia: 27%
- South Africa: 35% (under 18)
- Jamaica: 35.8%
- Zimbabwe: 44.6%
- Haiti: 46.5%
- 62 of 94 countries have a prevalence of double orphanhood under 0.5%
- 77 of 94 countries have a prevalence of double orphanhood under 1.0%
- Lesotho (5.4%), Zimbabwe (4.7%), Swaziland (3.6%), Malawi (2%), South Africa (4% - under 18); Botswana (1.4%???)
• Vast majority of children under 15 not living with their parents, **have both parents alive**.
• “Orphanhood” not the main factor. Others factors?
Children (0-17) not living with a biological parent

- Jordan 0.8%
- North Korea 0.8%
- Egypt 0.9%
- Armenia 1.2%
- Yemen 1.5%
- Azerbaijan 1.8%
- Pakistan 2.1%
- Namibia 37.9%
- Lesotho 37.1%
- Swaziland 33.3%
- Zimbabwe 26.6%
- Liberia 25.2%
- Sierra Leone 24.9%
- Thailand 20.3%
- Lao PDR 7.5%
- USA: 4%
Living arrangements for children under 15 not living with a biological parent - Kinship care

Percent distribution of children under 15 living with relatives and non-relatives among those living with neither biological parent (N=77)
40% of children under 15 not living with a parent in Guinea-Bissau were reported as the “niece/nephew” of the head of the household.
Key findings?

- **Huge diversity** in children’s living arrangements across countries and **within countries**
- **Age, wealth, rural-urban**, and to a lesser extent, **gender** matter.
- **Significant percentage of children DO NOT live with parents** even though their parents are alive
- **Kinship care** plays a major role in children’s care.
Focus on Eastern and Southern Africa

- Majority of children (0-17) in the region live with both biological parents but there are significant outliers.
  - In South Africa (44%) and Swaziland (41%), majority of children live with one single parent.
- Across the region almost 30% children live with a single parent. (cf. USA 27%; Colombia 36%)
- An estimated 33 millions children (0-17) live outside of parental care in Eastern and Southern Africa.
  (covers 98% of population in region)
Challenges with the DHS/MICS data

- Covers *only* children in households
- Data does not tell us *who the caregiver is*, just relationship to household head (MICS primary caretaker for under 5 if mother not present)
- **Non-uniform reporting of indicators:**
  - Some countries *do not report* on living arrangement and survivorship of biological parent indicators
    - Ex: MICS – Argentina, DHS – Angola, Bangladesh
  - Some countries previously included and *have subsequently dropped questions* on living arrangement and survivorship of biological parent indicators
    - Ex: DHS – Indonesia, Kenya, Morocco, Philippines
  - Relationship categories not consistent
Challenges with the DHS/MICS data

• Does not tell us anything about non-resident parents and any parental role played
• Does not tell us anything about children not in the household
• Limited data on quality of caregiving by parents/caretaker
• Very limited data on support accessed to enable caregiving
Thank you!

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