



# Second Round Table Meeting of Experts

on Strengthening Global  
and National Data on Children's  
Care through the DHS and MICS  
Surveys

4-5<sup>th</sup> February 2019, New York,  
USA

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# Improving Global Data to Inform Policy and Services to Strengthen Children's Care



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Meeting of Experts  
on Strengthening  
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Florence Martin  
4-5<sup>th</sup> February 2019, New York, USA

# Research on Children's Care (LMICs and HICs)

- **Critical importance of family and a family environment for child development and well-being** (Ainsworth and Bowlby, 1965; Bowlby, 1982; Schoenmaker et al, 2014).
- **Empirical research in psychology, neuroscience, social work, and other disciplines: Investing in children's early years** (*From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development*, 2000; *Does Family Matter?* Juffer 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](http://www.bettercarenetwork.org))

# The 'Orphanhood' Literature

- ***Children on the Brink*** (UNAIDS, USAID, UNICEF, 1997, 2000, 2004)
  - 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

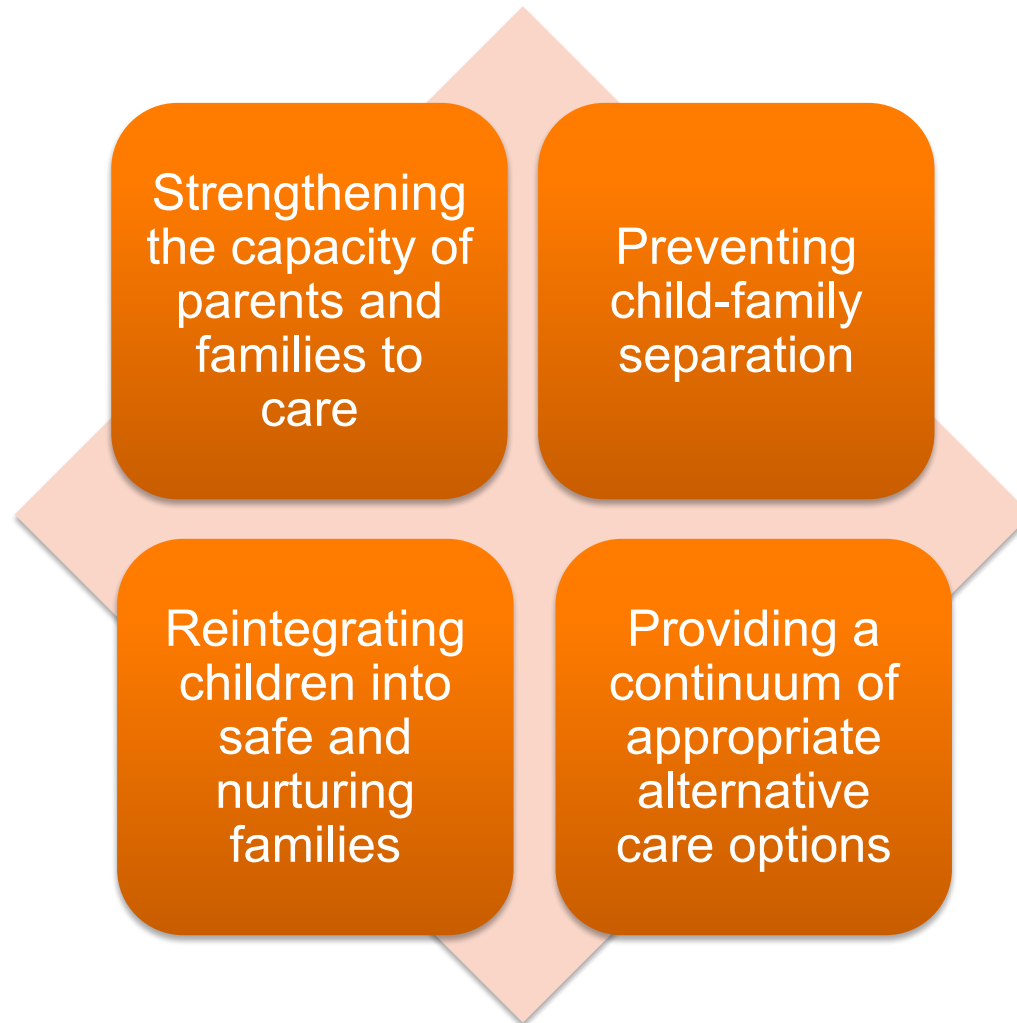
- **UNICEF: Measuring the determinants of childhood vulnerability** (Idele, Suzuki et al, April 2014)
  - Explored the utility of **existing markers of child vulnerability** based on UNICEF and UNAIDS definition of a child made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS (11 countries, DHS and MICS)
  - *“household wealth, 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



# International policy and standards

- ✧ *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



# 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...)**
  
- ✧ **The U.S. Government Action Plan on Children in Adversity (2012) A Framework for International Assistance**



# **States need better data on children's care and factors associated with child/ family separation**

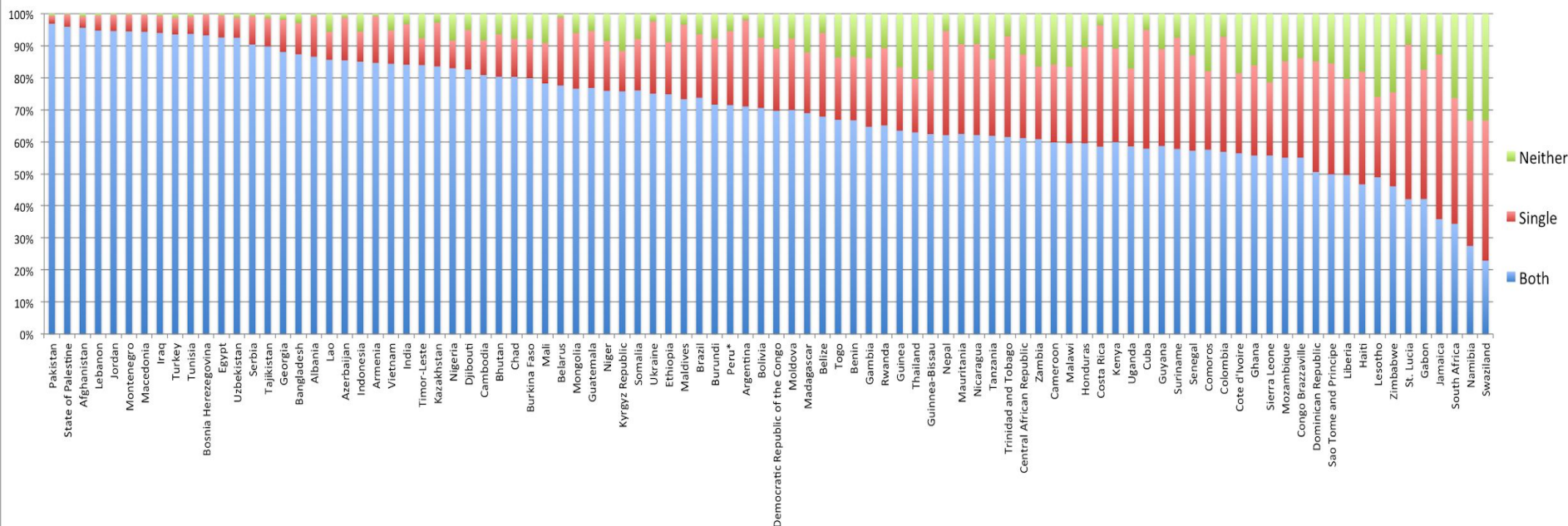
- **Strengthening data collection systems on children outside of family care**
- **Strengthening data collection systems on children in 'care vulnerable situations'/ at risk of separation in family care**
- **Making better use of existing national household surveys, in particular DHS and MICS, but also other relevant data sets (i.e. census data etc.)**

# What do we know about who cares for children from DHS/MICS data?



# Children under 15 by living arrangement- with both parents, one parent, or none

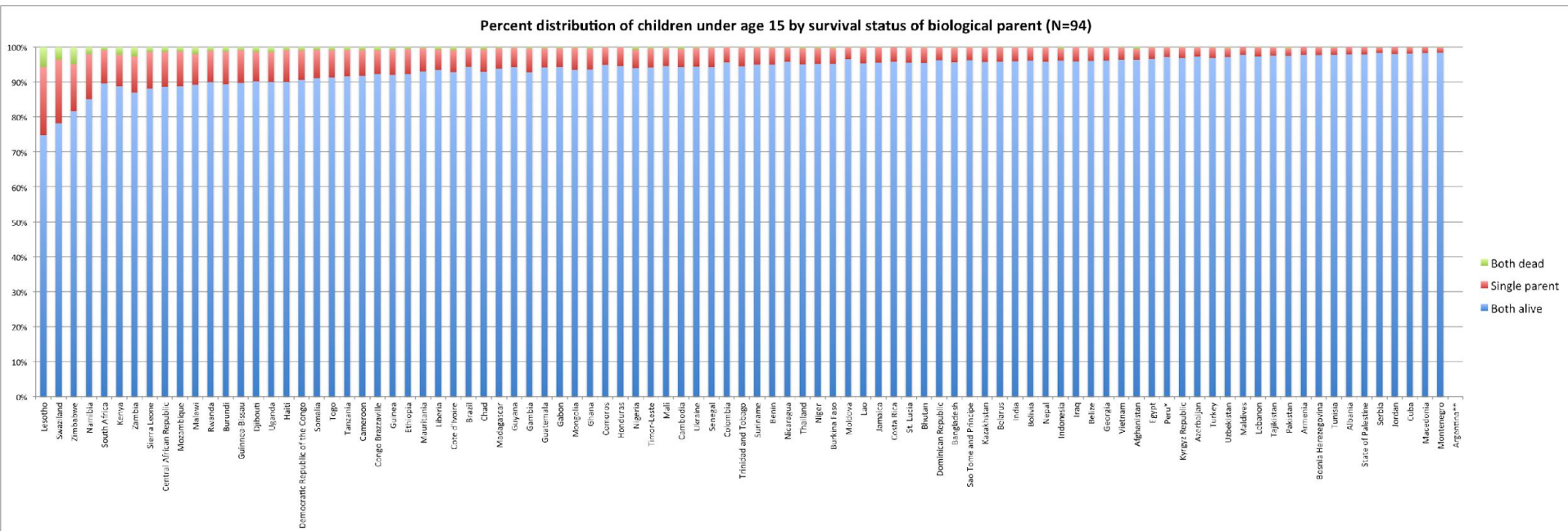
Percent distribution of children under age 15 by living arrangement with neither, one, or both biological parent (N=94)



## 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%

# Survival status of biological parents among all children under 15 (Single, double orphans and both parents alive)

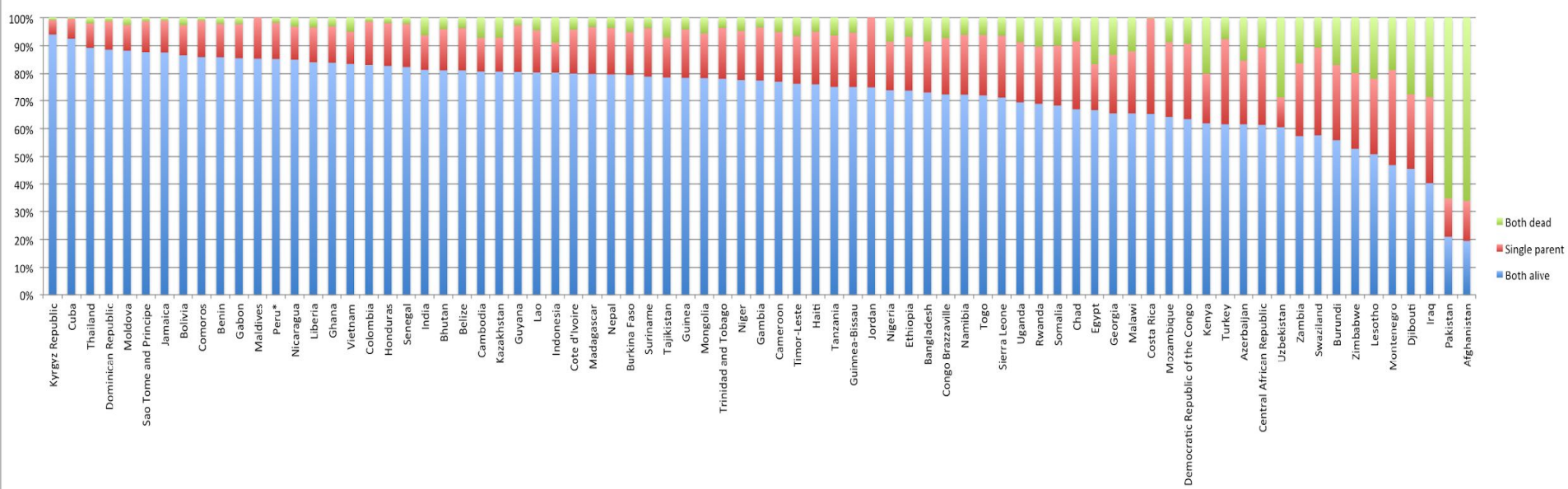


- 62 of 94 countries have a prevalence of double orphanhood under 0.5%
- 77 of 94 countries have a prevalence of double orphanhood under 1.0%
- Lesotho (5.4%), Zimbabwe (4.7%), Swaziland (3.6%), Malawi (2%), South Africa (4% -under 18); Botswana (1.4%???)



# ‘Orphanhood’ among children under 15 not living with a biological parent

Percent distribution of children under age 15 living with neither biological parent by survival status of biological parent (N=77)



- Vast majority of children under 15 not living with their parents, **have both parents alive**.
- “Orphanhood” not the main factor. Others factors?

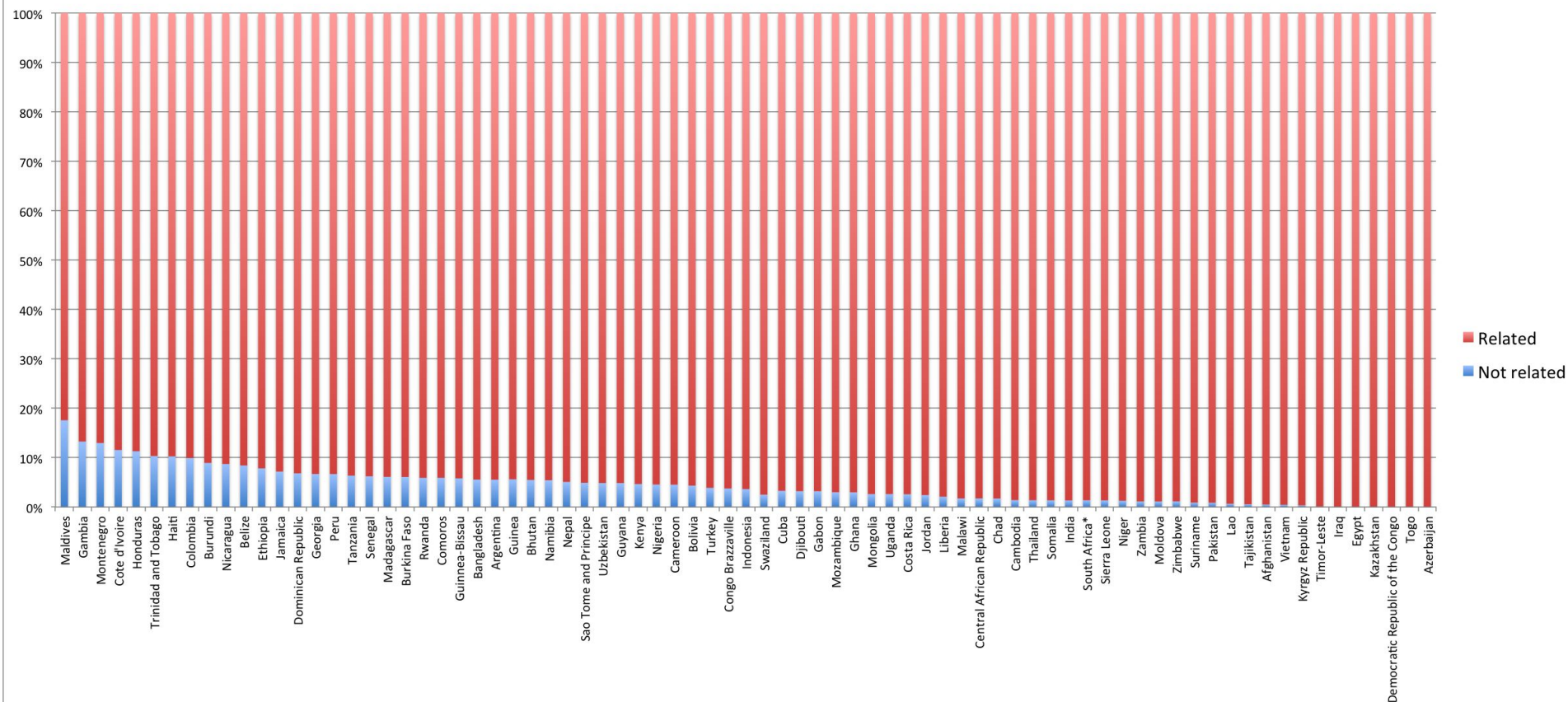
# Children (0-17) not living with a biological parent

- 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%**



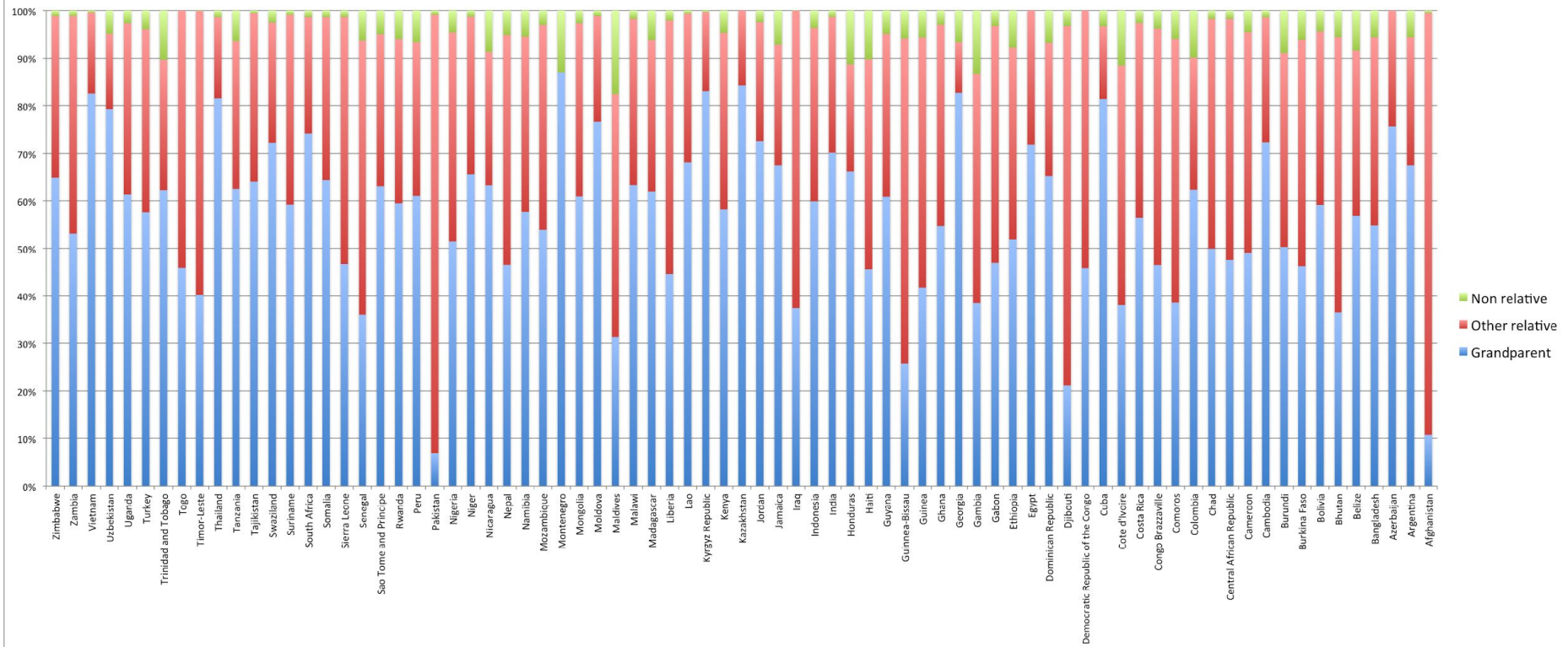
# Living arrangements for children under 15 not living with a biological parent- Kinship care

Percent distribution of children under 15 living with relatives and non-relatives among those living with neither biological parent (N=77)



# Living arrangements for children under 15 not living with a biological parent

Percent distribution of children under 15 living with neither biological parent:  
living with grandparents, other relative, or in non-relative households (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?

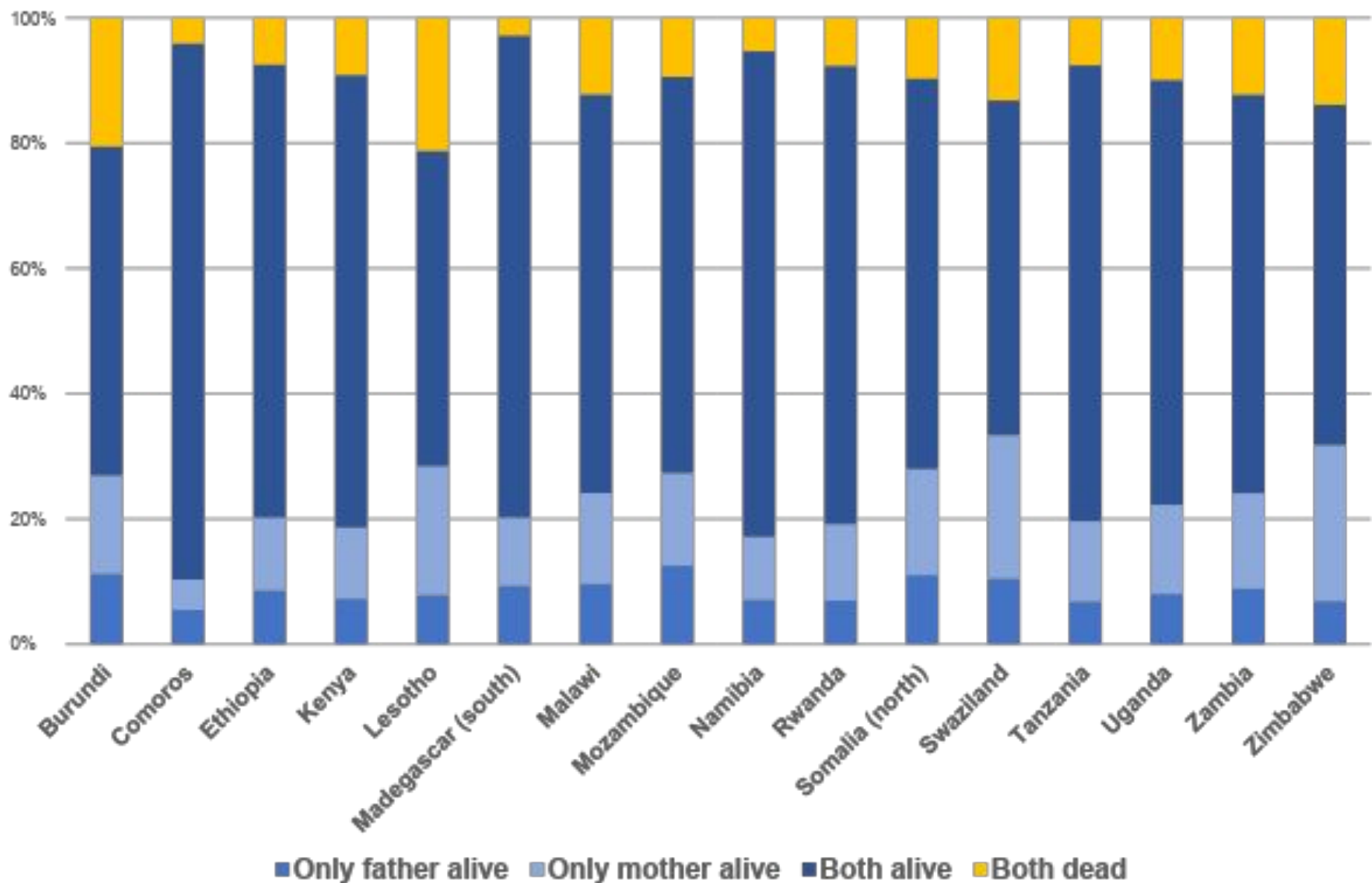
- **Huge diversity** in children's living arrangements across countries and **within countries**
- **Age, wealth, rural-urban**, and to a lesser extent, **gender** matter.
- **Significant percentage of children DO NOT live with parents** even though their parents are alive
- **Kinship care plays a major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

**Percent distribution of parent survival among children 0-17 living with neither biological parent**



# 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
    - 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



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**Thank you!**  
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