The Three Logs Story...
Papua New Guinea
Situation of children without primary caregivers

- 8% of children are double orphans (Children on the Brink)
- 22.4% of children were not residing with their parents in 2000 (Census).
- 10,000 children live on the street, up to half of whom live in the Nation’s Capital (Hunter).
- High rate of informal adoptions and fostering (up to 16% of households have step or adopted children) (Census)
Orphans by Type in PNG, 2003
Source: Children on the Brink 2004

Maternal 35%
Paternal 57%
Double 8%
Situation (cont)

- 9400 children orphaned as a result of HIV/AIDS (Hunter).
- Abandonment of children remains rare, but is increasing under the threat of the HIV/AIDS epidemic (e.g. single parents who are not confident that they can care for a child with HIV/AIDS).
Fostering and Adoption in Papua New Guinea may take place informally because:

- Single parents may feel unable to care for the child
- To maintain gender balance within the family
- A peace-building effort between tribes
- Marriage breakdown or death of parent
- Early marriage of the child (sometimes as young as 12 years of age)
Fostered/Adopted children are often more vulnerable because:

- Some children are separated from their mothers whilst still breastfeeding.
- Children residing outside of their wantok are perceived to have a lower status in their new family, and are at greater risk of abuse and exploitation.
- Some families feel pressured to take on the care of child, even if it is beyond their financial resources.
- These children rarely receive any psychosocial support.
Situation (cont)

Children living on/off the street:

- Estimated 1000-5000 street children in Port Moresby.
- 89% male, 11% female
- Majority are between 10-15 years of age
- Live off an average of 1-2 kina per day (approx. 0.32-0.65).

(Hunter)
Residential/Institutional Care Programs

- Rare in Papua New Guinea.
- New draft legislation discourages this model of alternative care.
- Some quasi-residential community care centres are being developed in communities with high numbers of children who are orphaned as a result of HIV/AIDS.
Residential/Institutional Care Programs (cont)

- Example: Tengtenga Orphans Care Centre (WHP)
  - 39 orphans
  - reports that community attitudes encourage stigmatisation and isolation of the children.
  - Some orphaned children are being exploited by family or care-givers.
Non-residential Care Models

- Erosion of the traditional Wantok system has resulted in reduced extended family support.
- Child-headed households are becoming more common.
- 2000 census identified approximately 5.2% of children as “fostered or step.”
- If those residing with adults who are “other relatives” or “not related,” this figure rises to 22.4%.
Non-residential Care Models (cont)

- Majority of adoptions are done under traditional arrangements and without formal recognition.
- Reasons include:
  - reinforcing family ties
  - caring for orphaned children
  - family unable to financially support child
  - balance family size/gender ratio
  - to provide help to older relatives
- Without adequate birth registration, it becomes difficult to track the movements of these children.
Govt Response to Date

- **Enabling legislation & policy**
  - Draft Lukautim Pikinini Act
  - Juvenile Courts Act (and new draft Juvenile Justice Act)
  - National Disability Policy (draft)
  - Education Policy (prioritizes vulnerable children)
  - Proposed new National Child Policy can provide overarching framework
  - Legislation will be reviewed in 2006.

- **Orphaned children currently do not have access to psychosocial or placement monitoring support services.**
Constraints and Lessons Learned

- HIV/AIDS Epidemic
  - Prevention is an ongoing challenge.
  - Some predictions suggest up to 13% of the adult population will be infected by 2010.
  - Less than 10% of those with HIV/AIDS are aware of their status.
  - Poor health services at primary, secondary and tertiary levels
  - Capacity for timely positive changes at the community level (Three Logs Story).
Constraints and Lessons Learned

- Lack of accurate data
  - Low birth registration
  - Low rates of HIV/AIDS identification
  - High levels of informal and unrecorded alternative care models.
Constraints and Lessons Learned

Many aspects of the current informal fostering and adoption systems provide a protective safety net for vulnerable children, however there is a need to influence the current systems to become more child-centered to ensure that the rights of the children in alternative care are respected.
Recommendations

- Support and strengthen existing clan-level safety nets.
- Promote a child-centered, human rights based approach to informal fostering/adoption.
- Review and amend relevant legislation.
- Monitor the “mushrooming” of care centres and support the replication of good models already developed by local communities.
- Building issue of orphaned children into the proposed National Child Policy.
One Blood

Examples of Alternative Care in Papua New Guinea
“They are my wantoks. We are one people, one colour, one blood.”

– Community leader, Poi Village
Shalom Care Centre
Tengatenga ‘Orphanage’
Kartanim Care Centre
Kenan Care Centre