



Important Topics in the care of Orphans and Vulnerable Children: Research and Practice

Dr Susan Hillis, Dr Tim Davy, Liviu Mihaileanu and Dr Sarah Todorov

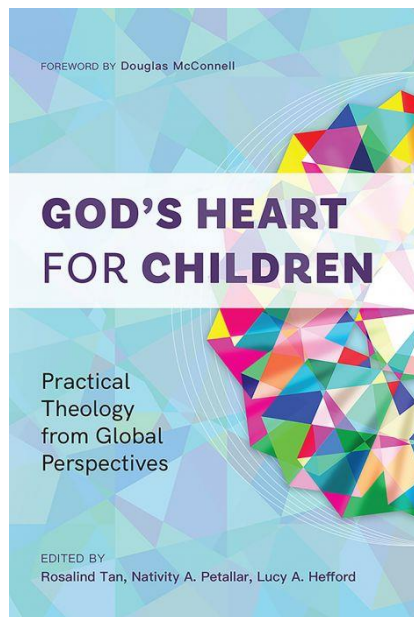
Theological Research



Trends in biblical and theological research on vulnerable children

***Tim Davy
World Without Orphans
Journeying Together***

A significant publication (2022)



Created in Dignity
Placed in Families
Cared for in Community
Advocated by Society
Secured in Hope
Affirmed in God's Church
Included in God's Mission
Engaged in Creation Care

<https://www.viva.org/ghfcwebinars>



Other themes

Drawing on wider work on 'child-focused' studies and theology

Theology **by** those who have been fostered and adopted


'orphan' texts in the Bible

Theology of safeguarding

Theology of hospitality

Theology of foster care

Trauma studies

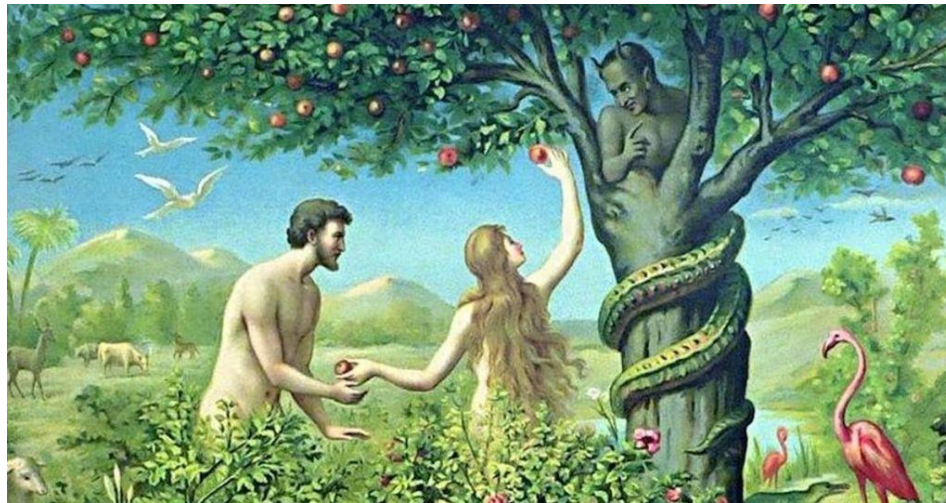


**The theology of adoption
and its practice among Romanian
Christian communities**

LIVIU MIHĂILEANU

Elements of adoption doctrine

The Fall



Elements of adoption doctrine

The Choice



Elements of adoption doctrine

The Cost



Elements of adoption doctrine

Adoption & Inheritance



*...you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."
So you are no longer a slave, but **God's child**; and since you are his child, **God has made you also an heir.**
(Galatians 4: 6-7)*

Preliminary conclusions on the research within Romanian evangelical Christian communities

- The first ones to adopt unwanted children from Romanian orphanages were faith-driven US citizens
- Adoption firmly discouraged within faith communities during the 90's
- Cultural shift towards adopting teenagers and children with disabilities within the last max. 10 yrs
- Less than 30% of the faith communities have been exposed to the message of adoption from a spiritual or natural perspective
- 45% of community member did not adopt because they never thought about it, 42% are afraid of bureaucracy

Health and Mental Health Research

Children Orphaned In the Pandemic in Europe and Beyond: Magnitude, Consequences, and Action

Susan Hillis, PhD, MS, Co-chair of the *Global Reference Group for Children Affected by COVID-19 and Crises: Joint Estimates and Action**

Alexandra Blenkinsop (WHO), Juliette Unwin (Imperial College), Andrés Villaveces (CDC), Lorraine Sherr (University College of London), Lucie Cluver (Oxford), Seth Flaxman (Imperial College), Oliver Ratmann (Imperial), Christl A. Donnelly (Imperial), Leandris Liburd (CDC), Charles A. Nelson (Harvard), Greta Massetti (CDC), Francis Annor (CDC).



COVID-19-associated Orphanhood in the News

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.
A Toll of Coronavirus in New York Is a New Group of Orphans
Although statistics are hard to come by, experts say the scale of the losses is likely staggering



The New York Times
He Is 16 and His Mother Died of Covid-19. What Happens To Him Now?
Children who lost their parents in the pandemic are fighting to hold on to what is left of their families.



The Washington Post
They depended on their parents for everything. Then the virus took both.

Now the Ismael children — 13, 18 and 20 — are struggling to cope with grief, but also with how to keep a car running, pay bills, be a family

BBC NEWS



'Grandmothers are vulnerable'
This past year, these grandmothers have become key frontline workers addressing the high rates of mental illness linked to the Covid-19 crisis.



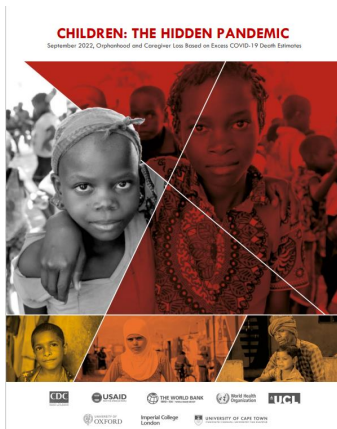
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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



ARTICLES | DECEMBER 01 2021

COVID-19–Associated Orphanhood and Caregiver Death in the United States

Susan D. Hillis, PhD ; Alexandra Blenkinsop, PhD; Andrés Villaveces, MD, PhD; Francis B. Annor, PhD; Leandris Liburd, PhD; Greta M. Massetti, PhD; Zewditu Demissie, PhD; James A. Mercy, PhD; Charles A. Nelson III, PhD; Lucie Cluver, PhD; Seth Flaxman, PhD; Lorraine Sherr, PhD; Christl A. Donnelly, ScD; Oliver Ratmann, PhD; H. Juliette T. Unwin, PhD

* Contributed equally as co-first authors



Including Orphanhood in National, State, & Local Responses

Research Letter

September 6, 2022



ONLINE FIRST 

Orphanhood and Caregiver Loss Among Children Based on New Global Excess COVID-19 Death Estimates

Susan Hillis, PhD¹; Joel-Pascal Ntwali N'konzi, MSc²; William Msemburi, PhD³; et al

[» Author Affiliations](#) | [Article Information](#)

JAMA Pediatr. Published online September 6, 2022. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2022.3157



More than 5.2 Million Children Affected by Global Surges in COVID-Associated Orphanhood and Caregiver Death: New Evidence for National Responses

24 Pages • Posted: 25 Nov 2021

H. Juliette T. Unwin

Imperial College London

Susan Hillis

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



THE LANCET

Articles

Global minimum estimates of children affected by COVID-19-associated orphanhood and deaths of caregivers: a modelling study



Susan D Hillis¹, H Juliette T Unwin¹, Yu Chen², Lucie Cluver, Lorraine Sherr, Philip S Goldman, Oliver Ratmann, Christl A Donnelly, Samir Bhatt, Andrés Villaveces, Alexander Dutchart, Gretchen Bachman, Laura Rawlings, Phil Green, Charles A Nelson III³, Seth Flaxman⁴

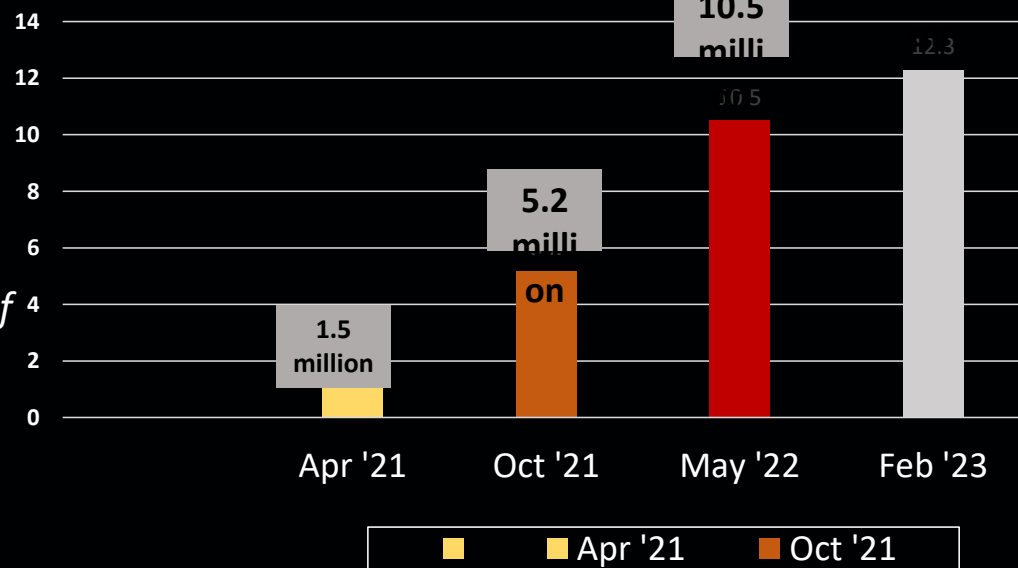


THE LANCET

Child & Adolescent Health

Global trends in pandemic-associated orphanhood and caregiver deaths continue to rise through the end of 2022, Mar 20 – Nov 22.

Children Orphaned by Excess COVID-19 Deaths



Hillis S, Ntwali N'konzi J, Msemburi W, et al. Orphanhood and caregiver loss among children based on new global excess COVID-19 death estimates. . *JAMA Pediatrics* 2022; (Online).

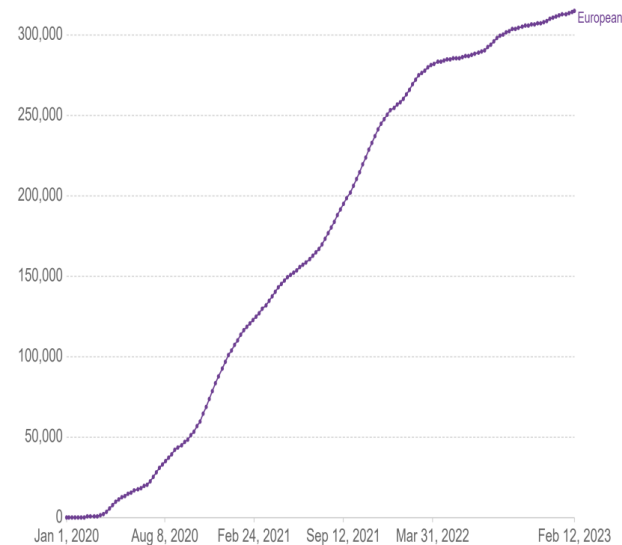
COVID-19-linked Orphanhood and Caregiver Death in Europe

**Orphaned children
275,600**

**Lost primary caregiver
339,900**

**Lost primary/secondary
caregiver
524,000**

Mar 1, 2020 – Feb 28, 2023



Source: Hillis, Unwin, Chen et al, The Lancet (2021) imperialcollegelondon.github.io/orphanhood_trends/ • Powered by ourworldindata.org

COVID-19 Orphanhood Calculator Widget, Real-Time Data, https://www.google.com/search?q=covid+orphanhood+calculator+widget&rlz=1C1CHBF_enUS1016US1016&oq=covid+orphanhood+c&aqs=chrome.2.35139j69j57j35139j0l2j30l4j69j60.6612j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8



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Excess Deaths In Europe Hit All-Time High in 2022

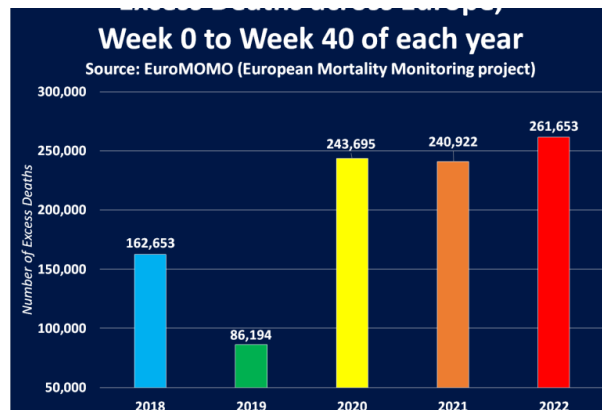
COVID-19 Deaths have not stopped:

-- From Apr 2022 to Feb 2023:

- 6.14m to 6.82m = **682,726m**

deaths

<https://covid19.who.int>



- Possible Reasons for Continued Rise in Europe and US – COVID-19, heat waves, unresponsive health care system

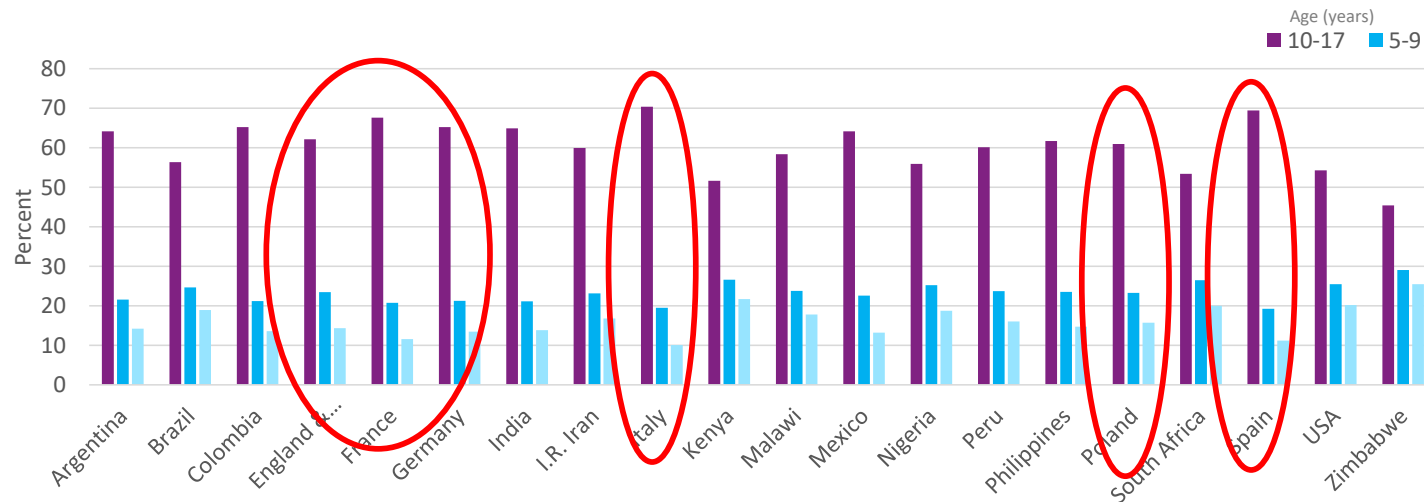
FEATURE

What will happen to the orphans of covid-19?

At least 10.5 million children have been orphaned by covid-19. **David Cox** reports on the global efforts to recognise and secure a future for them

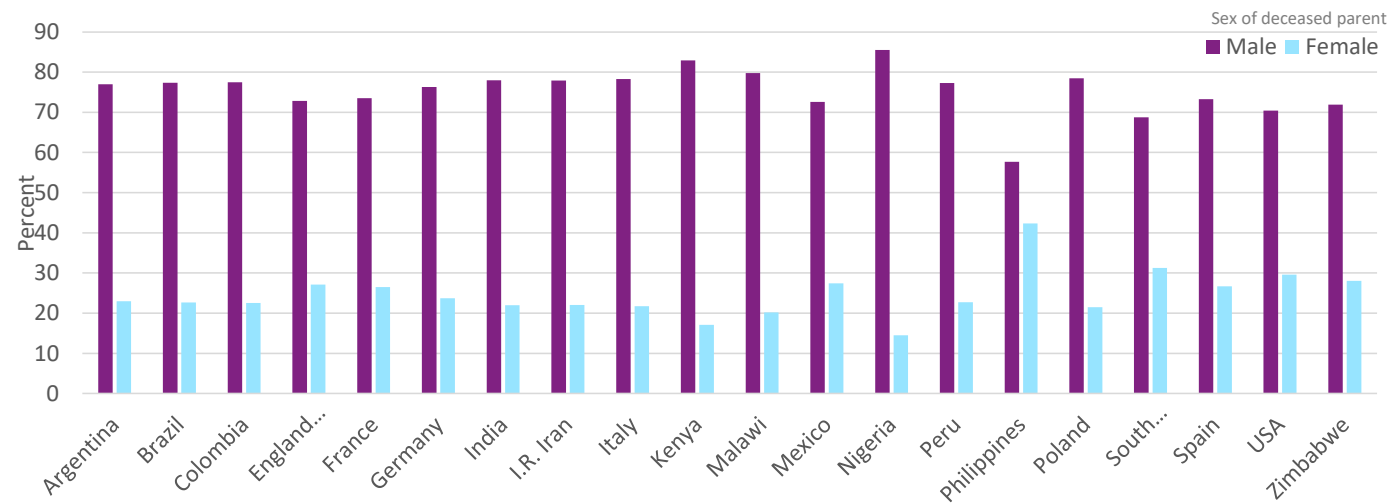
WHO Coronavirus Dashboard 6 Feb 2023, <https://covid19.who.int>

2 of every 3 COVID-19 orphans worldwide are adolescents, and are therefore at increased risk of sexual violence, incident HIV, mental health problems, adolescent pregnancy, severe distress



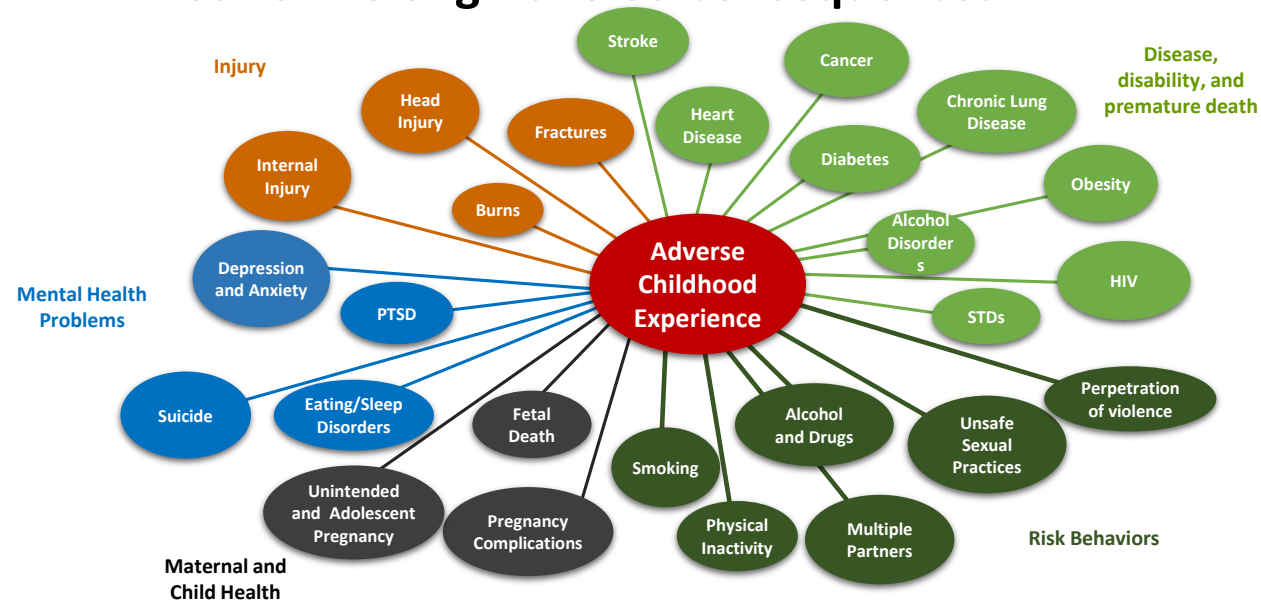
Updated estimates from source: 5.2 Million Children Affected by Global Surges in COVID-19-Associated Orphanhood and Caregiver Death (2022) The Lancet CAH https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3971556

3 of every 4 COVID-19 orphans worldwide have lost their fathers, and are therefore at increased risk of exploitation, abuse, poverty, and vulnerability to violent extremism*



* BWIRE: Battle against violent extremism can be won (citizen.digital), Developmental Predictors of Violent Extremist Attitudes: A Test of General Strain Theory - Amy Nivette, Manuel Eisner, Denis Ribeaud, 2017 (sagepub.com), Updated estimates from source: 5.2 Million Children Affected by Global Surges in COVID-19-Associated Orphanhood and Caregiver Death (2022) The Lancet CAH https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3971556, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3971556

Orphanhood is an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE), Linked to Lifelong Adverse Consequences



Source: Felitti VJ, Anda RF, Nordenberg D, et al. Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults. The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study. *Am J Prev Med* 1998; 14(4): 245-58.



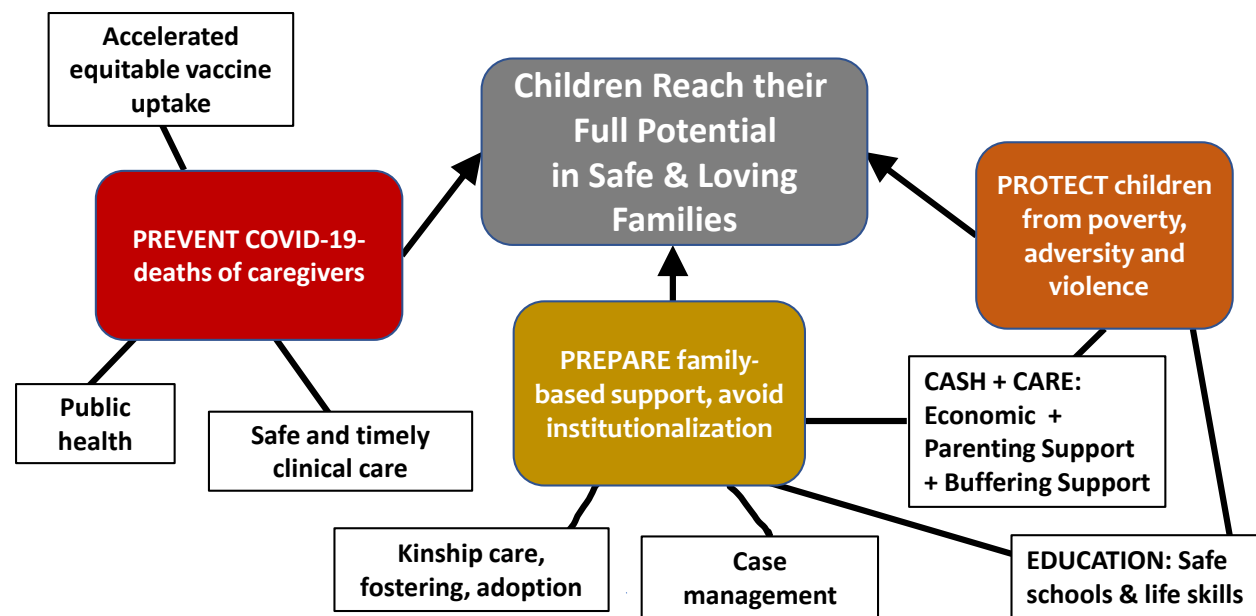
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CARE for Pandemic-Affected Children



PREPARE

family-based support,
avoid institutionalization



Find, monitor, and support the best family option – kinship, foster care, adoption



Avoid orphanages: high rates of abuse, cognitive and emotional impairment



Strengthen support networks: public, faith-based, community



Integrate orphanhood and caregiver death into surveillance, modeling, and forecasting

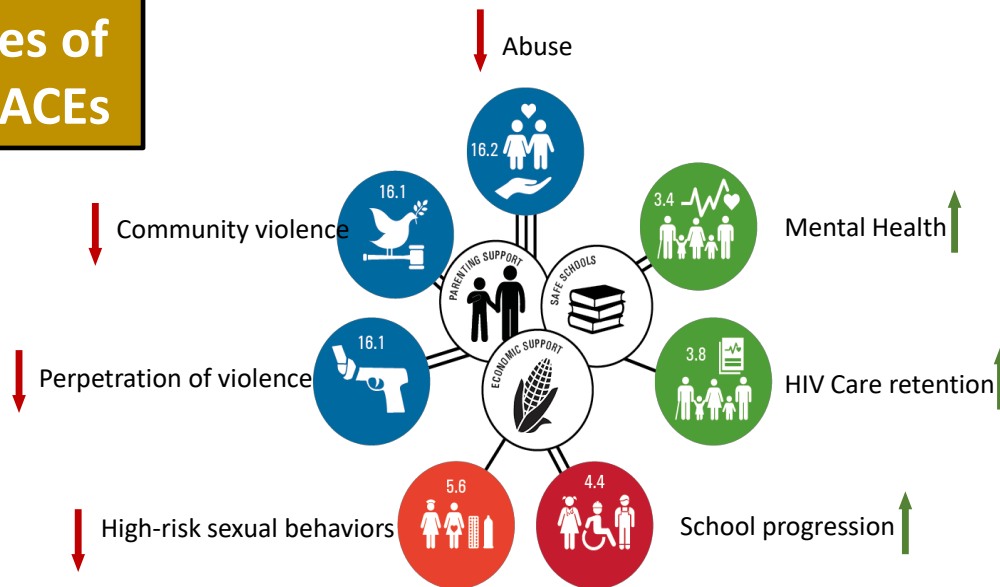


[Children: the hidden pandemic 2021 : a joint report of COVID-19- associated orphanhood and a strategy for action \(cdc.gov\)](#)

PROTECT children from consequences of orphanhood and ACEs

'Accelerators' address Social Determinants of Health

- *Parenting Support*
- *Economic Support*
- *Educational Support*



Source: Cluver, Orkin, Toska, Campeau, Webb, Carlqvist, Sherr, (2019) Lancet CAH AIDS, South Africa, with circles representing 2030 Sustainable Development Goals for health, peace, education, and gender equality. The color-coded circles represent contributions of such programming to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, with benefits to health, education, gender equality, and peace and justice

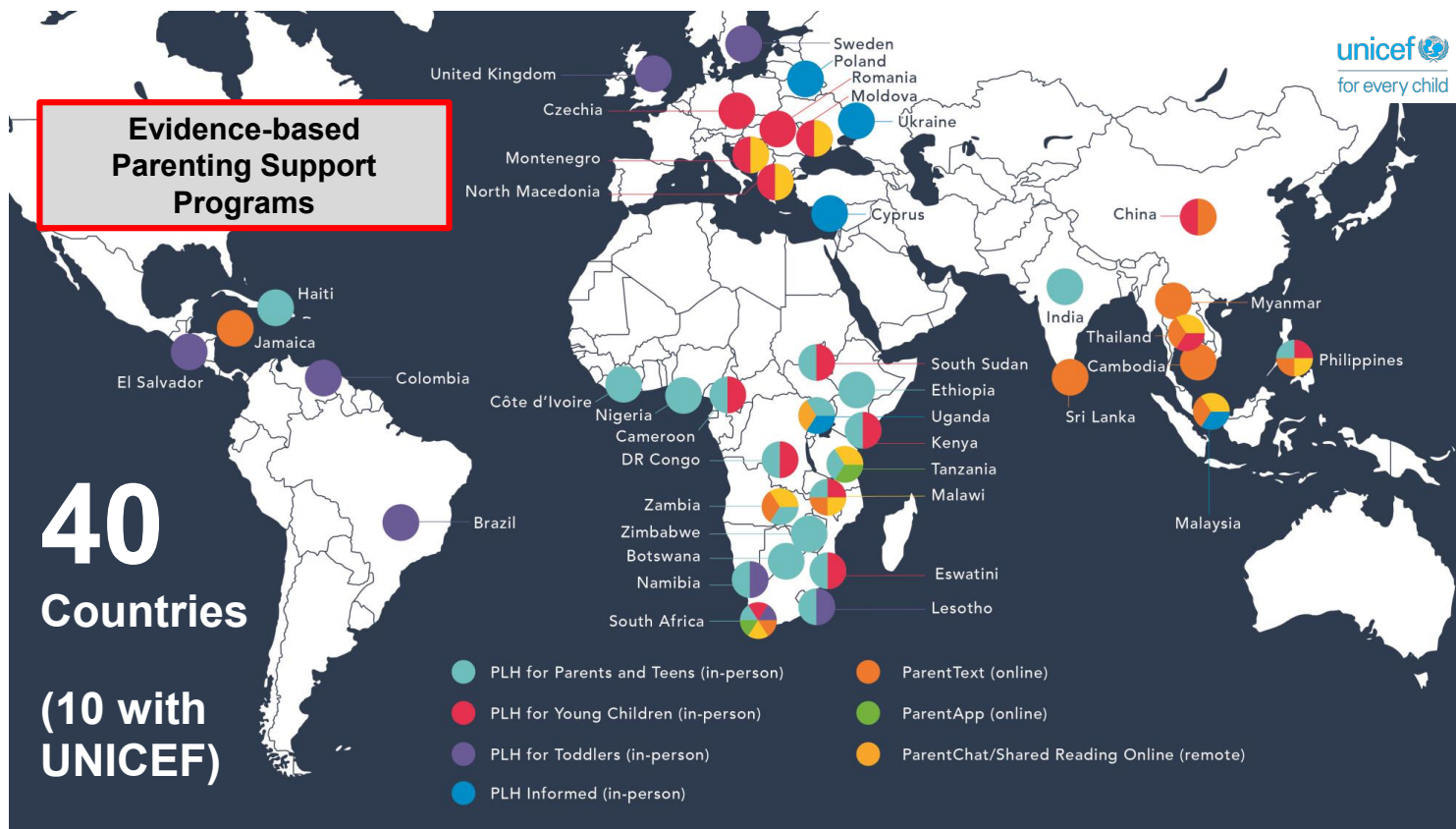


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2. Hillis S, Unwin J, Cluver L., et al. Children: The Hidden Pandemic February 2022 –Updated Interim Estimates. https://www.spi.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/spi/documents/media/hidden_pandemic_report.pdf
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8. Hillis S, Unwin J, Sherr L, Flaxman S, Villaveces A, et al. Children – The Hidden Pandemic, 3rd ed., September 2022. https://www.spi.ox.ac.uk/files/hidden_pandemic_report_september_2022_update.pdf

There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children.

Nelson Mandela, 8 May 1995

DISCLAIMERS

World Bank Group and World Health Organization: This work is a product of authors working across various institutions. The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this work are entirely those of the authors. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the authors' employers, their boards, or the governments they represent.

U.S. Government: The views, findings, and conclusions in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views or official position of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), United States Agency for International Development, President's Emergency Plan For HIV/AIDS Relief, or the U.S. Government.

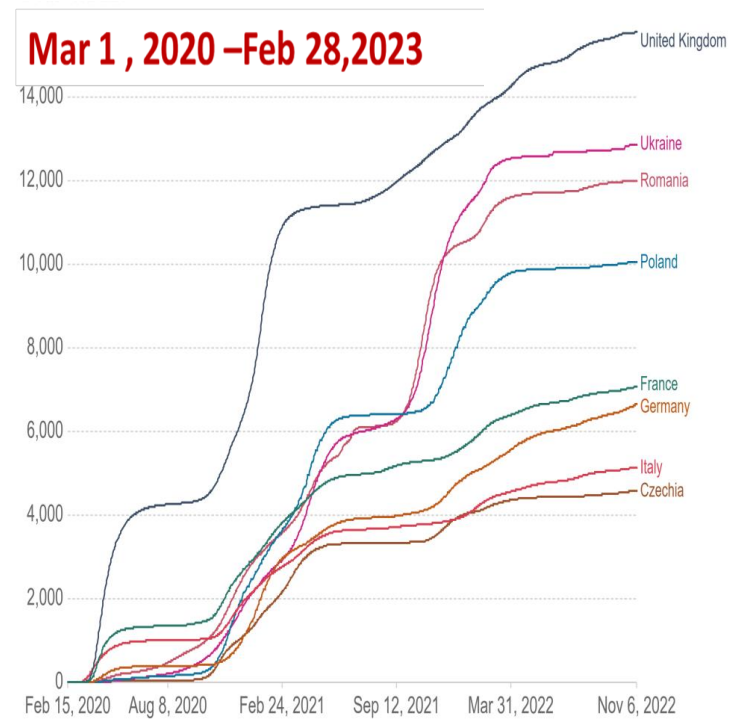


ALL CAUSE ORPHANHOOD: Why did Childhood Bereavement Rates Increase in the Pandemic in the U.S.?

Cause of Death	2015 # of Adult Deaths	2020 # of Adult Deaths	Increase 2015 vs. 2020
All Causes	138,100	192,500	54,300 (39%)
Accidents (includes overdose)	37,500	62,100	24,600 (66%)
COVID-19	N/A	10,200	10,200
Homicide	7,000	10,600	3,600 (51%)
Heart Disease	17,500	19,800	2,300 (13%)
Suicide	14,000	15,400	1,400 (10%)
Diabetes	3,400	4,800	1,400 (41%)

§2021 CBEM results included mortality data from 2015 - 2019 while 2022 CBEM results include data from 2016 - 2020. The 2021 and 2022 CBEM National report results consider deaths among adults age 27-46, or adults most likely to have children 0 to 18 years old.

Pandemic Orphanhood in Europe – Select Countries



COVID-19 Orphanhood Calculator Widget, Real-Time Data, https://www.google.com/search?q=covid+orphanhood+calculator+widget&rlz=1C1CHBF_enUS1016US1016&oq=covid+orphanhood+c&aqs=chrome.2.35139j69j57j35139j0l2j30l4j69j60.6612j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8



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Social Sciences Research

Foster care for children with disabilities: Findings from a study on foster parents' experiences in Bulgaria



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School of Education

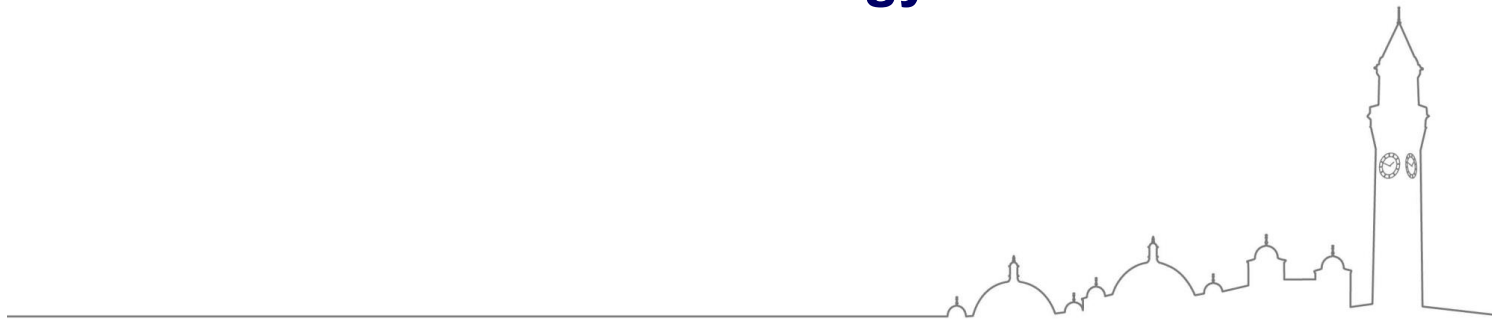
University of Birmingham, UK

'Journeying Together': World Without Orphans European Forum, Sofia, Bulgaria 15th-18th March 2023

Presentation outline

- **Part A:** Study context and methodology
- **Part B:** Summary of main findings
- **Part C:** Recommendations based on the research

Part A:
**Study context and
methodology**



Study context



Research questions

1. How do foster parents experience caring for children with disabilities in Bulgaria?
2. How do foster parents' experiences inform suggestions for changes to services and practices in foster care for children with disabilities in Bulgaria?

Methodology

In-depth semi-structured interviews in Bulgarian language

6 Foster parents with experience of fostering children with disabilities

Difficult to access population

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2022)

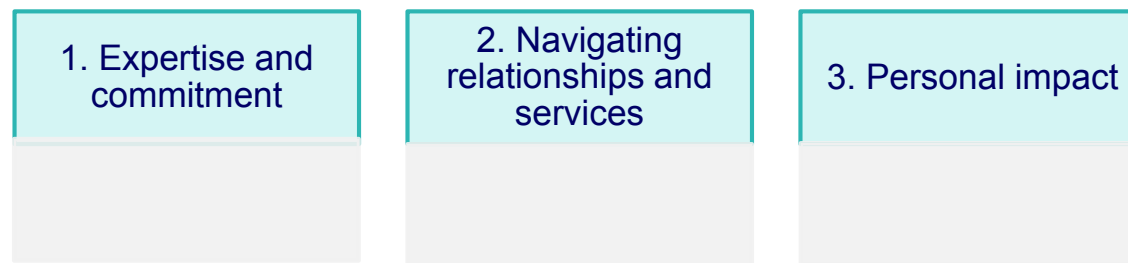


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Part B:
**Overview of main
findings**



3 Thematical Categories



1. Expertise and commitment

Sub-themes:

- Providing special care
- Weight of responsibility

“You have to fight windmills”



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2. Navigating relationships and services

Sub-themes:

- Meaning of support
- People to rely on
- Powerless and voiceless
- Perspectives on finance
- Experiences of biological families
- Relationships with social workers



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3. Personal impact

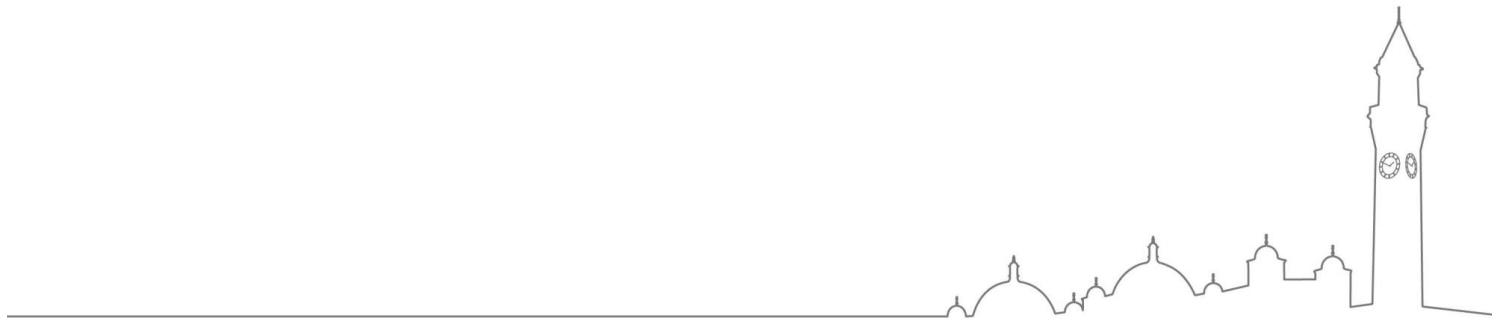
Sub-themes:

- Fostering was life-changing
- Separation is the hardest part
- Occupational hazards



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Part C:
**Recommendations based
on the research**



Recommendation 1

Increase access to foster care for children with disabilities as a matter of urgency.

Recommendation 2

Address public perception of foster parents.

Recommendation 3

Develop services for effective support of foster parents.



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<https://medium.com/@todorovsarah>



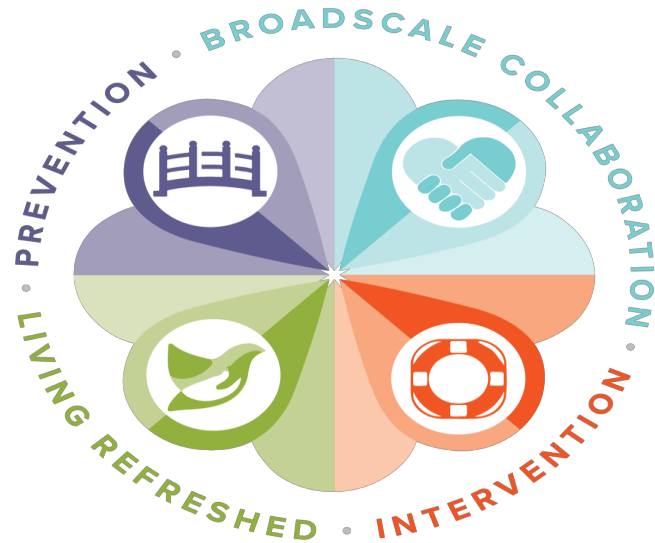
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Facebook: Dr Sarah Todorov - Research

Research in practice and achieving impact

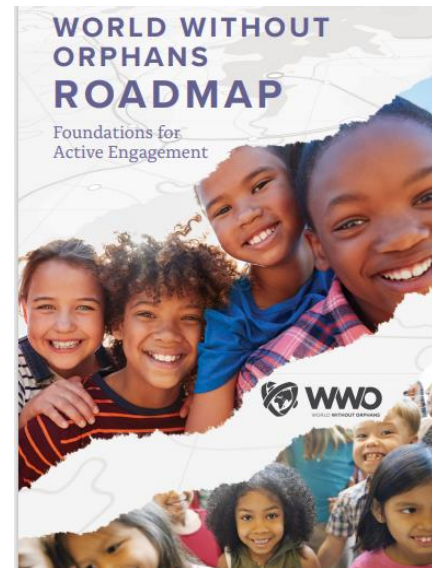
WWO
*Roadmap:
Foundations for
Active
Engagement –
It's
Development*

**WORLD WITHOUT ORPHANS
ROADMAP**



WWO Roadmap: Foundations for Engagement - Development Overview

- Prayer – WHY don't we see a World Without Orphans?
- Principles – a CORE set of the best available resources to advance WWO Movement
- Partners – Christ-followers collaborating across the spheres to advance the WWO DNA
- Process – Learning Community approach to WWO Roadmap authorship, implementation, evaluation



Prayer – WHY don't we see a World Without Orphans?

We need these 4 essential foundations each fully implemented and linked:

- Broadscale Collaboration – co-laboring with God and many to build His kingdom of love and safety for children and families
- Intervention – strengthen family based care through reunification, fostering, adoption
- Prevention – of orphanhood addresses root causes of violence and poverty
- Living refreshed – spiritual, relational, and practical self-care is the secret to flourishing in the Lord as we serve the most vulnerable children and families





Collaboration



Intervention



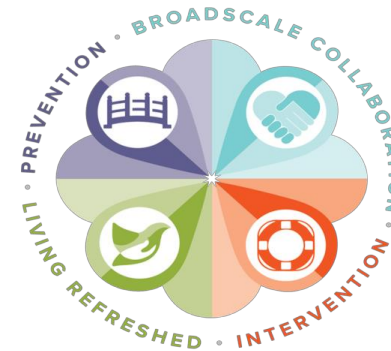
Prevention



**Living
Refreshed**

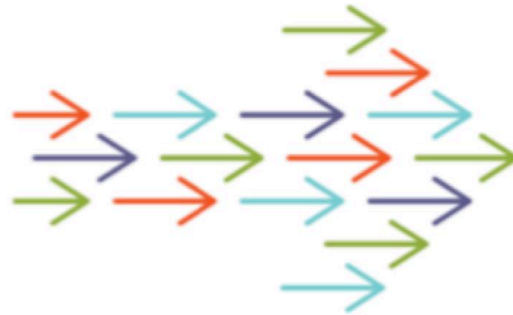
Principles – a CORE set of the best available evidence-based and expert resources in the world to advance WWO DNA

- Simplicity and cross-cultural relevance
- Builds the WWO Mission, Vision, Cornerstones
- Integrates spiritual/relational/practical
- Vetted, evaluated, evidence-based, best practises
- Basic: equip national Christian leaders to build capacity of local church leaders
- Commitment to core material from a variety of global partners with a track record of excellence
- Partners value collaboration over competition & make materials open source -- for collective impact
- Broadly applicable and easily understood by champions, advocates, and practitioners





COLLECTIVE IMPACT



Partners – Christ-followers collaborating across the spheres of influence to advance the WWO DNA and Movement

WWO Roadmap Partners

— *Alongsiders, Back2Back / Trauma Free World, Faith to Action, Home for Good, Hope at Home, HOPE International, LAMB International, Northlands Church, Orphan Sunday, World Health Organization*

-- WWO Implementation Partners

Global church networks – WEA, GCF, and others



SUPPORTING POSITIVE PARENTING – IN UKRAINE EMERGENCY RESPONSE

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WWO and Spheres Partners

Process – WWO Learning Community approach to Roadmap authorship, training, implementation, and evaluation

Authorship of WWO Roadmap (front cover)

Collaboration – WWO Partners & Ambassadors from 6 Regions

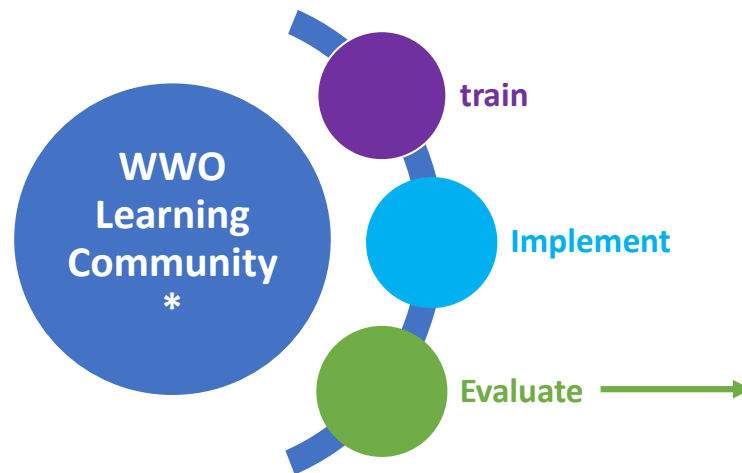
Intervention - Based on expertise from > 100 global trainers from 32 countries (Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, India, Bangladesh, Romania, Armenia, Jordan, South Africa, Botswana, Nicaragua, Brazil, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Nepal, Cambodia, Belarus, and more).

Prevention – Based on collaboration of 10 global agencies, including WHO, Centers for Disease Control, UNICEF, World Bank, with researchers and 140 program experts worldwide, identified the world's most effective programs for preventing root causes of violence in children

Living Refreshed- using experiences serving leaders worldwide, the authors share principles for living refreshed spiritually, relationally, and



Process – WWO uses a collaborative learning community approach to training and implementation, and evaluation (using WWO Results Measures)



** Learn from each other and from experts; take action and hold each other accountable*





**GOD'S CALL IS FOR BELIEVERS TO CARE
FOR ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE
CHILDREN!**

***TOGETHER WE CAN ACCELERATE
SOLVING THE GLOBAL ORPHAN CRISIS,
COUNTRY BY COUNTRY!***

Taking Effective Programs to Scale: The Research – Synthesis – Translation Continuum



Susan Hillis, PhD
Senior Research Officer
University of Oxford, UK

Choosing A Research Topic



- ✓ Heart
- ✓ Time
- ✓ Team
- ✓ Resources
- ✓ Clarity
- ✓ Importance



Care drives research



... 6 of 10 orphans HIV positive



The Research – Synthesis – Translation Continuum



Synthesis Example - Global Scale of Violence Against Children: A Systematic Review

One Billion Reasons To End Violence



2 Billion

children in the world

1 Billion

children subjected to violence

1 in 2 children under age 18 experienced violence in the past year¹

¹CDC 'Global Prevalence of Past-Year Violence Against Children: A Systematic Review and Minimum Estimates' (2016)

Violence:

"The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation" (WHO)

Estimates include data on:

- Physical violence
- Sexual violence
- Emotional/psychological violence

Hillis et al. *Global Prevalence of Past-Year Violence Against Children: A Systematic Review*, *Pediatrics*, 2016.

Translation Example: When Synthesized Research Leads to Funded Policy Change

THE WHITE HOUSE



NATIONAL COVID-19 PREPAREDNESS PLAN

Support families dealing with COVID-related loss. The Administration will continue providing financial assistance for COVID-related funeral expenses and further develop a bereavement response to support children and families who have lost loved-ones to COVID-19. The President will direct agencies to comprehensively review their programs, funding, and other supports they can make available to families experiencing loss due to the COVID-19 related death of a family member, further developing a response to support the pressing needs of children and families – both for operational needs like financial resources to cover funeral costs, and mental health and healing needs like trauma and grief informed services – in consultation with states, tribal, and local government resources and other community efforts.

NATIONAL COVID-19 PREPAREDNESS PLAN

Policy change requires political will.

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**There can be no keener revelation of a society's
soul than the way in which it treats its children.**

Nelson Mandela, 8 May 1995

I have no conflicts of interest to report.



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