



# Key Research on Orphanages and Family Care:

AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	page 1
<b>Orphans and Children in Orphanages: Global Estimates and Key Facts</b>	pages 2 - 3
<b>The Importance of Family Care and the Need for a Range of Options</b>	pages 4 - 5
<b>Orphanages: Key Challenges and the Impact on Children</b>	pages 6 - 7
<b>Strengthening Family Care and Preventing Placement in Orphanages</b>	pages 8 - 9
<b>Contributors</b>	page 10
<b>References</b>	pages 11 - 12

# Introduction

This resource – a companion to *Children, Orphanages, and Families: A Summary of Research to Help Guide Faith-Based Action* – is provided as a working bibliography of key research and evidence-based policy papers on the care of orphans and other vulnerable children separated from parental care.

Most of the documents in this bibliography are recent research studies, published within the last seven years. They have been selected because they have important implications for orphan care practice, are representative of current research, and are subject to academic rigor including a peer review process.

These studies include a range of research methods and approaches, from case studies focused on specific care settings or specific child populations, to comparison studies of different groups of children over time, to surveys of residential care in various country contexts. Some focus on a specific geographic location while others are more global in scope. Although it is common for researchers to differ in their use of terminology, we have tried to be as consistent as possible within this document, while also remaining true to the findings of the individual studies. For a general definition of key terms, please refer to the glossary found on pages 20-21 of *Children, Orphanages, and Families*.

This bibliography also includes several policy and position papers drawing from some of the most well-known and widely referenced research on orphans and vulnerable children. These have been carefully selected for their comprehensiveness, readability, and the extent to which they are representative of the numerous policy documents that exist.

Most of these studies and policy papers are academic in nature and therefore are not written within a Christian framework or that of any other faith. In the case where religion is mentioned, the information provided should be taken in context and should not be considered a view supported or endorsed by the Faith to Action Initiative.

Many of the documents included in this bibliography fit into multiple categories. For the ease of the reader, we have listed each document below under a similar heading to where it first appears in *Children, Orphanages, and Families*.

# Orphans and Children in Orphanages:

## GLOBAL ESTIMATES AND KEY FACTS

### ***All Children Count: A Baseline Study of Children in Institutional Care in Malawi (2013)***<sup>1</sup>

This study, commissioned by the Malawi Ministry of Gender, Children, and Community Development, employed in-depth interviews, questionnaires, and focus group discussions to provide an overview of the situation of children in orphanages in Malawi. A “snowball” technique was utilized, whereby subjects identify or recommend others to be included in the study to expand the reach and number of participants. A total of 104 institutions were identified including five types of care facilities – orphanages, special needs centers, church homes, transit care centers, and reformatory centers. The study included the number of children in care, reason for placement, case planning, HIV status of children, types of services offered by the orphanages, and the profile and education or training status of staff. It was noted that more than 50% of the residential care facilities included in the study were engaged in direct recruiting of children from families by the orphanage staff or others (e.g., teachers, health care officials), and that 91% of the 6,000 children in care lacked a case plan.

### ***Caring About Poverty (2007)***<sup>2</sup>

This paper examines the link between poverty and placement of children in orphanages drawing on case studies from three countries – the Republic of Moldova, Bulgaria, and Sri Lanka. Case studies from the three different contexts had similar findings. Key themes addressed included: poverty as a major underlying cause of children being received into orphanages; reception into care is a costly and often harmful response to adverse economic circumstances; and alternatives to care may be funded from resources committed to orphanages by developing a policy that includes a mechanism to help ensure that children are not unnecessarily placed in orphanages – typically referred to as gatekeeping. Gatekeeping aims to ensure proper review of the case prior to placement, permitting all actors involved in the case to determine if placement is necessary and if not, to identify family strengthening services (prevention) and/or family-based alternative care for the child.

### ***Home Truths: Facing the Facts on Children, AIDS and Poverty (2009)***<sup>3</sup>

This Joint Learning Initiative on Children and AIDS report summarizes research conducted over a two-year period on AIDS-related policies, programs and services. Global leaders in research, policy, program implementation, and persons living with HIV comprised the research team. The report recommends refocusing efforts towards strengthening families and empowering communities to better respond to the unique needs of children affected by HIV and AIDS. The promotion of family-based care as well as integrated approaches addressing HIV, health, poverty, and food insecurity are also emphasized in the recommendations.

### ***Improving Care Options for Children Through Understanding Institutional Child Care and Factors Driving Institutionalization (2011)***<sup>4</sup>

This study takes an in-depth look at residential care in Ethiopia including information regarding reasons for placement, as well as a review of the types and quality of residential care facilities for children and youth. The study aimed to collect up-to-date and relevant information on the current situation of children in residential care, including attitudes and practices of staff and community members. Young adults raised in residential care during their childhood were included to ensure that the voices and experiences of youth were taken into consideration. One of the main objectives of this study was to provide information to help inform policy and practice, promote de-institutionalization efforts, and bolster alternative, family-based care efforts.

### ***National Survey of Institutions for Children in Rwanda (2012)***<sup>5</sup>

In 2010, Hope and Homes for Children, in partnership with the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF) in Rwanda, conducted a national survey of all orphanages for children in Rwanda. The survey covered 33 orphanages, all of which were registered with the MIGEPROF. Information was gathered regarding the location, staffing, infrastructure, and management of the orphanages as well as data regarding the children in care. This data included age at placement, reason for placement, length of time in care, and existence of living relatives. Qualitative data from a group of children representative of those in orphanages regarding their personal experience within the orphanage was also included. It was found that 30% of children had been in the orphanage for more than ten years, illustrating how the orphanage had become a permanent rather than temporary care option for a significant number of children. The results of the study were used to advocate for and inform the development of the National Strategy for Child Care Reform approved by the Government of Rwanda in 2012.

### ***The Risk of Harm to Young Children in Institutional Care (2009)***<sup>6</sup>

This paper summarizes the extent and scale of children under three years of age living without parents in residential care (including children's homes), and the reasons why they are being placed in care. The paper also includes information on the global situation of all children in residential care. A research-based overview of the risk of harm to young children's care and development after being placed in orphanages is provided.

### ***With the Best of Intentions: A Study of Attitudes Towards Residential Care in Cambodia (2011)***<sup>7</sup>

This study, commissioned by the Cambodian Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation and UNICEF aims to better understand attitudes and beliefs that are contributing to the increase in orphanages in Cambodia. The study was the result of concern by government, UNICEF, and civil society members over the 75% increase from 2005-2010 in the number of orphanages, funding from foreign donors, and the rise of "orphan tourism." The role of attitudes about and perceptions of orphanages on the part of children, parents, local leaders, and governments and the role that poverty, misconceptions, and weak regulation have on the expanding use of orphanages as a primary care option for children are explored.

# The Importance of Family Care

## AND THE NEED FOR A RANGE OF OPTIONS

### ***Cognitive Recovery in Socially Deprived Young Children: The Bucharest Early Intervention Project (2007)*<sup>8</sup>**

This seminal research, conducted in Romania, compared the development of three groups of children through 54 months of age. These included abandoned children reared in orphanages; abandoned children placed in orphanages but then moved to foster care; and a third group of children who had always been within a family environment. The findings illustrate that children who remain in orphanage care have cognitive development that is lower when compared to those placed in foster care, and significantly lower than those that were never in an orphanage. Additionally, the research shows that the earlier a child can be placed in a family environment the better the cognitive developmental outcomes will be, highlighting the need to place children in a family environment as early as possible.

### ***Effects of Profound Early Institutional Deprivation: An Overview of Findings From a UK Longitudinal Study of Romanian Adoptees (2012; Available for purchase)*<sup>9</sup>**

This paper compares a randomly selected sample of 165 children from Romania (the majority reared in orphanages) who were adopted by families in the United Kingdom (UK), with a sample of children from the UK who had never been in orphanages and who were domestically adopted by families in the UK before six months of age. The children were studied at ages four, six, and eleven. A brief summary explains the circumstances at the time of adoption and then reports findings at age eleven. Positive catch up in psychological development of children after adoption is highlighted, as are significant problems in a minority of children placed after six months of age.

### ***Family Matters: A Study of Institutional Childcare in Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union (2005)*<sup>10</sup>**

This report's findings reveal that providing emotional and practical support to vulnerable families can help prevent infant abandonment or enable the reintegration (reunification) of a child who is in an orphanage back into his/her birth or extended family. The study also shows that where this is not possible, family-based alternative care options, such as foster care, are a less costly and an overall better option for vulnerable children.

### ***Plasticity of Growth in Height, Weight and Head Circumference: Meta-Analytic Evidence of Massive Catch-Up of Children's Physical Growth After Adoption (2007)*<sup>11</sup>**

This meta-analysis reviews 33 articles exploring the effects of institutionalization and subsequent placement in international adoption on children's physical growth. The analysis of the research reveals that the more time spent in orphanages, the more the children lagged behind in physical growth, specifically height and weight. After placement in adoption, children showed almost complete catch-up of height and weight, but not of head circumference.

***Providing Alternatives to Infant Institutionalisation in Bulgaria: How Gatekeeping Can Benefit From a Social Development Orientation (2013)***<sup>12</sup>

This paper explores research on gatekeeping in Bulgaria, focusing on children under age three and prevention of placement in residential care. Bulgaria recently instituted a significant care reform initiative that includes deinstitutionalization, with particular focus on children under age three, and the establishment of gatekeeping mechanisms. Gatekeeping, within this document, is described as a key strategy to ensure that unnecessary placement in orphanages is avoided through decision-making processes informed by assessments and the availability of a range of child welfare services. The paper suggests that current efforts could be enhanced and benefit children if issues of social exclusion and poverty were addressed and a strengths-based approach was adopted by social workers.

***Residential Care for Abandoned Children and Their Integration Into a Family-based Setting in Uganda: Lessons for Policy and Programming (2014)***<sup>13</sup>

This article describes a model of care for abandoned and neglected infants in Uganda that underscores the importance and effectiveness of a continuum of care approach in addressing the needs of abandoned infants. Of particular interest is the approach utilized to ensure family-based care including reintegration and domestic adoption. This article highlights policy and programming lessons and effective, contextually relevant interventions that are holistic, protective, promotional, and transformational.

# Orphanages

## KEY CHALLENGES AND IMPACT ON CHILDREN

### ***Anguish of the Abandoned Children (2011)***<sup>14</sup>

This working paper describes findings from the first-ever randomized trial comparing the emotional and physical well-being of children in orphanages and foster care in Romania. It was found that children who lived their first two years in an institution had a lower IQ and reduced brain activity compared with children who were placed in foster care (after being in an orphanage) and children who had always been within a family. The study highlights the idea of a sensitive period wherein a child must receive emotional or physical contact (also referred to as a reciprocal relationship) for appropriate development to occur. When this does not exist, as in the case of Romanian orphanages, there are notable physical and cognitive developmental delays. The research findings contained within several articles related to the Romania study are cast in a format and language accessible to policy makers and practitioners.

### ***The Caregiving Context in Institution-reared and Family-reared Infants and Toddlers in Romania (2007)***<sup>15</sup>

This report assesses individual differences in the caregiving environments of young children being raised in Romanian orphanages in relation to developmental characteristics including physical, cognitive, and emotional development. Several methods were utilized to collect information and results were compared with children that had never been in orphanages. Data confirm that children raised in orphanages have significant delays in physical and cognitive development, highlighting the important role that caregiving quality by staff has on the development of young children in orphanages.

### ***The Development and Care of Institutionally Reared Children. The Leiden Conference on the Development and Care of Children Without Permanent Parents (2012)***<sup>16</sup>

This article summarizes the literature on elements of research, practice, and policy pertaining to the development and care of children raised in institutions. The article highlights research that demonstrates the negative effects that orphanages have on children's development as well as evidence supporting family-based care. Issues of indiscriminate friendliness, physical and cognitive growth delays and sensitive periods receive specific attention. Recommendations are made concerning policy and practice issues to consider when moving from an orphanage-based care system to a family-based system.



***Growth Failure in Institutionalized Children (2011; Subscription required for full article)***<sup>17</sup>

This paper highlights research that demonstrates: children within orphanage settings experience significant suppression of growth; catch-up growth in height and weight are rapid when children are placed in a more nurturing family-based setting; and that potential for growth recovery is greatest in younger children and within family environments. Findings summarized in this paper support the idea that the earlier a child is placed within a family, the better for developmental and cognitive catch-up. Furthermore, it suggests that psychosocial deprivation within any caregiving environment during early life must be viewed with as much concern as any severely debilitating childhood disease.

***IQ of Children Growing Up in Children's Homes: A Meta-Analysis on IQ Delays in Orphanages (2008)***<sup>18</sup>

In this meta-analysis of 75 studies on more than 3,888 children in 19 different countries, the intellectual development of children living in children's homes (orphanages) was compared with that of children living with their (foster) families. Children growing up in children's homes showed lower IQ's than did children growing up in a family. The age at placement in the children's home, the age of at the time of assessment, and the socio-economic status level (i.e., extent of poverty) of the country of residence were associated with the extent of the delays.

***The Neurobiological Toll of Early Human Deprivation (2011; Subscription required)***<sup>19</sup>

This working paper reviews the neurobiological literature on early placement in orphanages that may account for psychological and neurological pathological conditions including deficits in attention, executive functions, and disorders of attachment. The extent and severity of these disorders appear to be mediated, in part, by the age at which the child entered and, in some cases, left the orphanage.

***The Science of Neglect: The Persistent Absence of Responsive Care Disrupts the Developing Brain: Working Paper 12 (2012)***<sup>20</sup>

This paper builds upon thirty years' worth of research on children to explain why significant emotional and physical deprivation, such as the absence of responsive human relationships, is harmful in the earliest years of life. It also discusses why effective interventions that improve caregivers' ability to positively interact with children in the early years (e.g., positive parenting) are likely to have significant positive long-term outcomes in learning, health, and parenting of the next generation. Evidence from Romanian orphanages is applied to both children in residential care and those that are neglected within families, thus promoting the need for more interventions that help support and

# Strengthening Family Care

## AND PREVENTING PLACEMENT IN ORPHANAGES

### ***The Cost Effectiveness of Six Models of Care for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in South Africa (2001)***<sup>21</sup>

A variety of models of care for orphans currently exist in South Africa. These models vary in both the quality of care offered and the cost of providing it. This study concentrates on the cost of providing care in each of six identified models ranging from formal children's homes to community-based structures, utilizing cost effectiveness analysis. The results show the high costs associated with formal (institutional) models of care, but also the difficulties of providing care in the informal (family-based) models due to lack of access to resources. The paper concludes that resources should be concentrated on the more informal community-based interventions that are traditionally used to protect children. It advocates that these existing interventions or approaches are the most cost-effective care for orphaned and vulnerable children while recognizing the need for more formal organizations as a last resort.

### ***Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children (2009)***<sup>22</sup>

This international tool provides a framework for use by governments, service providers, social workers, and other practitioners in the provision of alternative care. It highlights the need for preventing unnecessary separation of children through the provision of services aimed at strengthening families. Key principles include the necessity and the suitability of alternative care, as well as the importance of the best interests of the child and child participation. Used with its handbook - Moving Forward: Implementing the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children - this tool provides a framework for ensuring that children have a range of care options available, beginning with family strengthening and support, and suggests that residential care is used only when appropriate and necessary. The evidence base related to the negative effects of residential care on children's development is reflected in Article 21 where family-based care is prioritized especially for children under age three.

### ***Ideal Components and Current Characteristics of Alternative Care Options for Children Outside of Parental Care in Low Resource Countries (2011; Subscription required)***<sup>23</sup>

This paper examines critical components and characteristics of alternative care for children in low-resource countries. Different care options within a continuum of care options are noted, beginning with family strengthening and reunification, alternatives such as kinship care, foster care, and permanent options of domestic and intercountry adoption. An approach is advocated that recognizes the importance of family-based care, existing international guidance, and the importance of a strong social welfare workforce. The role of values within policy and practice related to child welfare are explored; and comparisons are made to alternative care in high-versus low-resource countries. Specific examples are provided from Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Africa. Finally, recommendations are made for more research on alternative care for children to help inform policy and practice.

***Moving Forward: Implementing the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children (2012)***<sup>24</sup>

This handbook supports implementation of the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children by making strong connections between national policy, practice, and the Guidelines themselves. It includes policy and “promising practice” examples, and provides signposts to additional resources. It is a user-friendly document for actual implementation.

***Strategies to Avoid the Loss of Developmental Potential in More Than 200 Million Children in the Developing World (2007)***<sup>25</sup>

This paper assesses strategies to promote child development and to prevent or improve the loss of developmental potential. The paper concludes the most effective early childhood development programs provide direct learning experiences to children and families, are targeted toward younger and disadvantaged children, are of longer duration, high quality and high intensity, and are integrated with family support, health, nutrition, or educational systems and services.

***Reaching for Home: Global Learning on Family Reintegration in Low and Lower-middle Income Countries (2013)***<sup>26</sup>

This report synthesizes learning from a multitude of reports, studies and programming documents around issues related to children separated from parental care, such as those torn from their families by emergencies, children who have been trafficked or migrated for work, and children living in institutions or on the streets. It states that while there is no global definition of the term “reintegration”, there is now general agreement that reintegration is a process and not an event, that requires tracing, identification, preparation of the child and the family for return, and significant monitoring and follow up.

***Systems, Strategies, and Interventions for Sustainable Long-Term Care and Protection of Children With a History of Living Outside of Family Care (2012; Available for purchase)***<sup>27</sup>

This article reviews the available evidence regarding the efficacy, effectiveness, ethics, and sustainability of approaches to strengthen systems to care for and protect children living outside family care in low- and middle-income countries. The evidence reviewed indicates that child protection systems should aim for appropriate, permanent family care for children to secure the best environment for a child's developmental prospects. Evidence also suggests that the quality and duration of care, including both permanent family care and alternative care, are important regardless of setting.

***What Are the Most Effective Early Response Strategies and Interventions to Assess and Address the Immediate Needs of Children Outside of Family Care (2012)***<sup>28</sup>

This systematic review of 101 peer-reviewed articles and programming documentation identifies evidence-based early response strategies and interventions for improving the outcomes of children outside of family care. The review explains promising early interventions and approaches including family tracing and reunification of children in emergency situations, livelihood supports, psychosocial and educational supports, social integration, and child participation. A recurrent theme was the need for interventions to be contextually appropriate and child-centered.

## Notes

Many of these documents are referenced in *Children, Orphanages, and Families: A Summary of Research to Help Guide Faith-Based Action* and can be directly accessed online (note that some require subscription in order to access). Many other documents referenced in *Children, Orphanages, and Families* (including research and program reports, opinion pieces, and practical tools) are not included in this bibliography but are available on the websites of the Faith to Action Initiative and the Better Care Network.

Recognizing that the evidence base continues to expand as interest in and information about orphan care grows, this annotated bibliography will be updated regularly. Readers are also encouraged to visit the Faith to Action Initiative website for new research and information.

## Contributors:

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This resource is produced by the Faith to Action Initiative, with support from the Oak Foundation and the Better Care Network. The Faith to Action Initiative serves as a resource for Christian groups, churches, and individuals seeking to respond to the needs of orphans and vulnerable children. Through publications, website, and workshops, the Faith to Action Initiative offers practical tools and resources and up-to-date information on key strategies and research to help guide action. The Better Care Network facilitates active information exchange and collaboration on the issue of children without adequate family care, and advocates for technically sound policy and programmatic action on global, regional, and national levels.

**For more information and updated resources, please visit:**

**[www.faithtoaction.org](http://www.faithtoaction.org) and [www.bettercarenetwork.org](http://www.bettercarenetwork.org)**

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This resource – a companion to *Children, Orphanages, and Families: A Summary of Research to Help Guide Faith-Based Action* – is provided as a working bibliography of key research and evidence-based policy papers on the care of orphans and other vulnerable children separated from parental care.

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