

YUNMUN XXX

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)

Topic 2: Children Without Parental Care

There are approximately 150 million “orphans” in the world. The term “orphan” refers not only to children who have lost both parents, but to those who have lost one parent as well.¹ When children lose their parents, they have lost their security, and their future hangs in the balance. There are several reasons for separation, including migration, trafficking, abduction, displacement, army recruitment, death of parents, poverty, health issues, and household violence, to name a few.² The number of orphans in developing countries is estimated to be a staggering 132 million.³

In 2010 UNICEF released their report “At home or in a home? Formal care and adoption of children in Eastern Europe and Central Asia,” in which they analyze the living situations of children without parental care in these areas. You are encouraged to read the entire report, but the key point is that even though the governments in these areas have attempted to reform their formal care systems, it is not enough. Here is an excerpt:

“Despite the governments’ engagement in reforms... the rate at which children are separated from their families has continued to increase. In 2007, throughout the 20 countries considered... approximately 1.3 million children in this region lived in various types of alternative care arrangements, separated from their families... This situation needs addressing immediately. Based on the findings of this report, we renew our call for a shift towards preventing children from being separated from their family environment in the first place... this report demonstrates that preventative work must be intensified. It also shows us that residential care must be much better managed, so that when staying in an institution really is necessary, it is an exceptional, temporary solution in a system that is properly geared towards family reintegration or longer term and stable family-based resolution.”⁴

These issues with institutional care are not limited to the regions of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The ‘United Nations Guidelines on Children in Alternative Care’ stated in 2009 that “all children should be in family based care. We firmly believe this model offers children and young people the best chance of a brighter future and we are therefore committed to promoting this model of foster care the world over.”⁵ In many regions, orphanages have become business ventures, failing to use governmental support for the benefit of the children. It is estimated that 8 to 10 million infants and children live in orphanages around the world, with millions of dollars coming in from aid agencies, governments, and religious institutions being taken as revenue instead of support. There is often neglect, cruelty and abuse taking place in institutions such as these. When children then go to leave these orphanages and institutions when they “graduate” around the age of 16, they have little to no social skills and are sent into the world with no

¹ <http://mattdarvas.com/2014/09/04/global-orphan-crisis/>

² https://www.unicef.org/protection/57929_58004.html

³ <https://borgenproject.org/status-orphans-developing-countries/>

⁴ <https://www.unicef.org/protection/Web-Unicef-rapport-home-20110623v2.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.ifco.info/about-ifco/mission-statement>

direction or support. Sadly, these children often do not serve as upstanding members of society. Because of this, some organizations have decided to shift their support from orphanages to families, to help them raise their children, so that they do not need to resort to alternative care.⁶

When it comes to foster care, many countries don't have foster systems at all, or are only beginning to develop them.⁷ According to Dr. John DeGarmo, an international expert on foster care, "so many nations across our world still struggling with the human rights of children, and how to best care for those children in need. Sadly, so many nations across our world still do not value children."⁸ It is our job to ensure that the rights of children are valued and protected worldwide.

Some Questions to Consider:

- What types of policies can we implement as the international community, to improve the lives of children without parental care?
- What can we do to improve existing orphanages and institutions?
- Are there successful orphanages in your country? What can the international community learn from them?
- Is foster care/alternative familial care the solution? If so, how?
- Why are there so many orphans in your country? What are the local contributing factors? What are some possible ways to reform that?
- Is the answer to go back to the family and try to provide support there?
- How can we come together as an international committee to reform adoption and foster care systems among countries with varying beliefs?
- If the root of the problem goes as far as countries not valuing the human rights of children, how can we address that?

Best of luck with your research, this is a multifaceted issue and this topic paper really only skims the surface, so don't be afraid to explore deeper. Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions or concerns at hlevitin@mail.yu.edu.

All the best,

Hannah Levitin
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⁶https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/orphanages-are-no-place-for-children/2013/08/09/6d502fb0-fadd-11e2-a369-d1954abcb7e3_story.html?noredirect=on

⁷<https://www.kidsinthehouse.com/blogs/dr-john-degarmo/global-experts-agree-children-deserve-a-better-foster-care-system>

⁸<https://www.kidsinthehouse.com/blogs/dr-john-degarmo/global-experts-agree-children-deserve-a-better-foster-care-system>