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From Trajectories of Despair to Trajectories of Hope

Baroness Caroline Cox

Christian Solidarity Worldwide

I would like to say a few words of introduction about myself and the organization with which I work, Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW). All I ever say about myself is that I am a nurse and a social scientist by intention and a baroness by astonishment. It is God's sense of humor, because I have to confess I do not like politics. When I received a summons to Number Ten Downing Street by the then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, asking me if I would take a seat in the House of Lords, I nearly fell off my chair with astonishment. I said to myself, "God, what are You doing? You know I do not like politics." That having been said, of course, the House of Lords is a wonderful arena in which to be able to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves and to be a voice for the voiceless. But it is a far greater privilege to speak in the house of the Lord and for this opportunity I thank you.

CSW works for victims of repression in many parts of the world, including advocacy on behalf of victimized children. There are no more heartbreaking examples of victimized children than the hundreds of thousands orphaned and abandoned in the former Soviet Union. Often maltreated, institutionalized, abused, and suffering, their situation must deeply grieve our Lord of love, who had a special love for children and asked that they should be brought to Him for blessing.

Misdiagnosis of Orphans as "Oligophrenic"

In the early 1990s in Leningrad, one of the new democratically elected deputies, Alexander Rodin, came to me deeply concerned: "I've been using my new democratic right to gain access to institutions that have previously been completely closed. I'm worried by what I've found. I've gone to some of the

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A Theme Issue on Post-Soviet Children at Risk

Mark Elliott

The theme of this issue of the *East-West Church & Ministry Report*, children at risk in post-Soviet societies, draws heavily upon presentations given at the National Summit of the CoMission for Children at Risk, held in Atlanta, GA, 9-11 November 2000. At that meeting more than 200 participants representing over 120 church and parachurch agencies gave concentrated focus to practical questions regarding Christian ministry to post-Soviet orphans and street children.

Vision for the meeting came from Peter and Anita Deyneka of Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries, Wheaton, IL. Longtime advocates and practitioners of ministry in the Soviet—and now post-Soviet—bloc, the Deynekas already had served as catalysts for a July 2000 Moscow meeting of Russian Christians involved in work with homeless children. As a result of this gathering, a very capable professional, Natalia Loginova, emerged to lead a new indigenous organization, "To Russian Children with Love,"

whose purpose is to facilitate Christian ministry to children at risk. Mrs. Loginova and another concerned Russian believer, Mrs. Galina Obrovets, attended the National Summit in Atlanta, providing many specific and concrete opportunities for Western ministries to partner with Russian Christians in outreach to homeless children. (See their eleven proposed projects posted on the Global Center Web site: www.samford.edu/groups/global.)

Even though in late June 2000 Peter Deyneka faced an immediate return to the U.S. for medical testing and treatment, he and his wife Anita nevertheless met with Natalia Loginova and Galina Obrovets for over four hours, discussing how best to help Russian orphans and street children and planning for the National Summit scheduled for November 2000. The Deynekas were not able to attend the Atlanta meeting they helped inspire

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I've gone to some of the orphanages for so-called oligophrenics or imbeciles and I'm puzzled. These youngsters were bright, lively, able, and articulate.

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orphanages for so-called oligophrenics or imbeciles and I'm puzzled. I'm in the system and I cannot judge. Will you come and give your independent evaluations and assessment?" So I went to an orphanage for so-called oligophrenics and I could see why he was puzzled. *Oligophrenia* translated from the Russian, means "little brain" or imbecile. But these youngsters were bright, lively, able, and articulate. We played table tennis with them. I am no table tennis champion, but I do not play badly, and they held their own. These children asked me about Margaret Thatcher. They were keen to learn. These children were less oligophrenic than I am. Why were they given this diagnosis? I learned that once they are diagnosed oligophrenic, it is a sentence to a doomed and stunted life. They will not be able to receive a full education, will never be able to choose a career, and will be denied the right to vote and the right to drive.

Alexander (Sasha) said, "If you share my worries, will you help? Will you come back to Russia and bring experts who have international credibility? If through scientific research you find there is cause for concern, then you will have some internationally credible evidence with which to try to challenge and change the system." I organized a team of educational and clinical psychologists, a pediatrician, myself as a nurse and social scientist, and a cameraman, and we went back to Russia to undertake systematic research.

Positive Russian Response to Trajectories of Despair

We found that over 70 percent of children doomed with the diagnosis of oligophrenia were in fact average or far above average in ability. Most of the rest were perfectly normal children. There were very, very few with learning disabilities. I came back to England and wrote a report entitled *Trajectories of*

Despair. I remember sitting at my work in the middle of the night with tears streaming down my cheeks. We went back to Russia to publish the Russian language edition, expecting opposition because it was a stinging human rights report written in a white heat of anger. Nobody likes to be criticized. This is when miracles started. At our press conference, the directors of the orphanage where we had done our research were very positive. They thanked us for our research because it documented what, being in the system, they could never articulate.

To our surprise, Russian officials asked us to set up the first foster family care program in Russia and gave us a building. As a result, our family program was born in Moscow and has flourished. Children come there with heartbreaking case histories. I remember one of our first little children, about five years old. Her mother was a prostitute. One night one of her clients did not like the presence of this little girl and threw her out a window. She survived and came to "Our Family," our children's care center. She now is a happy girl. Give love, and it is amazing what healing that love can bring. Our house parents provide a family atmosphere in that home, along with professional support, including psychologists and pediatricians.

We take our stewardship of the ministry that God has given us very seriously. We want to make sure that we are doing the best we can for Russia's children and for those who are trying to help them. It is my hope and prayer that it will not be too long before, in God's wisdom and love and with the work of everyone who truly cares, the lives of all the orphaned and abandoned children of the former Soviet Union will be transformed from trajectories of despair to trajectories of hope. ♦

Baroness Caroline Cox is president of *Christian Solidarity Worldwide* and a deputy speaker of the *British House of Lords*.

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because of Peter's failing condition. This highly respected mission statesman died of lymphoma cancer on 23 December 2000—see *East-West Church & Ministry Report* 9 (Winter 2001), 4–6. But the inspiration and dedication of this exemplary missionary couple nevertheless gave momentum to the other conference planners: Dr. Ron Braund of Mission Specialties (chair) and Dr. Mark Elliott of the Beeson Divinity School Global Center (program coordinator).

So much valuable material on ministry to post-Soviet children at risk is now available, from the National Summit and from other sources, that the *East-West Church & Ministry Report* can only publish a sampling of it. This being the case, full texts of articles, equivalent in length to what is published in the present theme issue, may be accessed and downloaded from the Beeson Divinity School Global

Center Web site: www.samford.edu/groups/global. Articles on post-Soviet children at risk not included in this theme issue but available at the Global Center Web site, are Richard Carter, "The Silent Crisis: Children in Poverty in Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union"; Barbara Johnson, "Humanitarian Aid and Russian Customs"; Jack Stevenson, "Assisting Orphanages in Siberia"; Chris Cavanaugh, "NGOs in Russia: Providing Alternative Services to Children and Families"; Nila Neumiller, "The Body Language of Children at Risk"; Alexandre Zouev, "A UNICEF Report Documenting Post-Soviet Children at Risk"; Deniese Dillon, "Fifty Years of International Adoption"; and Debbie Wynne, "International Adoption—Lessons and Cautions." ♦

Mark Elliott is editor of the *East-West Church and Ministry Report*.

Bless the Children

Kay F. Rader

The Biblical Mandate

Children at risk in Russia and the former Soviet Union are coming over the hill. Do we see them? They cry to us. They are running to us with hope in their hearts that we will hear their cries, that our arms will be open for them, that we are eager to touch their lives in blessing. Children in crisis draw from us a new commitment to see to it that they receive the blessing they deserve. Edward T. Bradley, in his contribution to the book, *Children in Crisis: A New Commitment*, says, "Throughout the Old and New Testaments we see God the Father and Jesus pleading on behalf of the fatherless and others who are powerless, helpless, and utterly dependent upon Him—or upon His people. His compassion compels and commands us to care for them, to have His heart for them, and to share in the responsibility of that care." This is what we want—to more effectively and efficiently care for, to have God's heart for, and to share in the responsibility for the 1.2 million children at risk in Russia and the former Soviet Union.

The Old Testament law makes clear God's intentions.

- ◆ *His Intention for Their Protection.* The Israelites were not to take advantage of an orphan or a widow (Exodus 22:22). The cries of orphans and widows take precedence with God. He hears them.
- ◆ *His Intention for Provision.* These days we hear about the "have-gots" and the "have-nots." God outlines His plan for provision in Deuteronomy 14:28–29, a plan that includes everyone. No one ends up in the have-not category. Why? "So that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work that you undertake."
- ◆ *His Intention Regarding Justice.* In *Great Expectations*, Charles Dickens wrote, "In the little world in which children have their existence, whosoever brings them up, there is nothing so finely perceived and so finely felt, as injustice." Long before Dickens, God raised the issue. In Deuteronomy 24:17 we are instructed, "You shall not deprive an . . . orphan of justice; you shall not take a widow's garment in pledge." Likewise, the prophet Isaiah (10:1–2) reminded Israel of the judgment of God on arrogance and oppression: "Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed . . . making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless."

The New Testament model is seen most clearly in the story of Jesus blessing the children recorded in the Gospels of Matthew (18:2) and Mark (10:13–16). What kind of person is able to bless the children at risk in Russia? In the materials I have read and through my own travels in Russia and the former Soviet Union, I have observed that the blessings

sought and so desperately needed by these children cover a vast range of needs.

A Desperate Need for Blessings

The blessings they need may simply mean (1) having someone find them a mother; (2) trying to make a difference "one life at a time"; (3) being willing to do what can be done within a system, in spite of the system; (4) perhaps finding a safe haven and giving respect to the little people of these countries, whether they are healthy or ill, with or without mental capacity, with or without parents; or (5) perhaps seeing them as part of the ends, not as a means to an end. Blessing to thousands of these children at risk means (6) using drugs when appropriate, and not as punishment; (7) fostering them within the context of a real family; (8) adopting even the mentally disabled; (9) establishing homes for abandoned children; (10) supporting parents to keep them from abandoning their children; (11) supporting the UN Rights of the Child; and (12) giving accurate psychological diagnosis instead of arbitrary classifications, which orphans often carry like an albatross around their necks for a lifetime. Blessing is (13) stopping brutal behavior; (14) running a school or an orphanage; or (15) taking in as many orphans as one's house will hold, remembering that "God stretched the oil for the widow" (2 Kings 4). Blessing is (16) giving love to children at risk, often for the first time in their lives.

What kind of person is able to bless the children? In *Voice of the Voiceless*, Baroness Caroline Cox describes one such person as "lively, with sparkling eyes and the zeal and determination to make things happen." We may not all have lively, sparkling eyes, but we all can resolve to make something happen for children at risk roaming the streets, living in railroad stations and sewers, and the 650,000 living in government-run orphanages in Russia.

"Remember the Children"

Charles Dickens writes in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, "I love these little people; and it is not a slight thing when they, who are so fresh from God, love us." We resonate with this, because we too love children. The wonder is that they, so fresh from God, care for the likes of us. Children at risk need someone there for them, someone acting on their behalf. Etched into the wall of the entranceway in London's Children's Hospital are the words "Remember the children, the dear precious children, remember the children, each girl and each boy." When I visited Rwanda in 1994, the word in Kinyarwanda was "tu-zi-ri-ka-na a-ba-na." In Georgian Kartuli, I understand, it is

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"*da-makh-so-vre-ba shvi-te-bi.*" Whatever the language, it means the same: "Remember the children."

Salvation Army Work

The Salvation Army is an organization of 130-plus years. In 1912 our founder, William Booth, gave his final public address. Though blind, he used the metaphor of a militant, saying, "While women weep as they do now, I'll fight; while little children go hungry, as they do now, I'll fight; while there is one poor lost girl upon the streets, I'll fight. I'll fight to the very end!"

Having spent nearly 40 years as a Salvation Army officer myself, having served in three countries and having visited 75 of the 107 countries where the Army ministers, I have been privileged to observe, up close and personal, Booth's international army of fighting soldiers. A recent E-mail report suggests that every Salvation Army corps in the former Soviet Union could tell its story of ministry to children at risk. Outreach includes orphanages, children's hospitals, caring for street children, feeding and clothing them, involving them in programs, getting them into camps, trying to make a difference, and doing what can be done with the means available.

Reaching the Poorest of the Poor

In 1993 my husband and I made the first of many visits to Moscow and St. Petersburg. Soon after our arrival we found ourselves in a Moscow train station alongside a woman named Ivy Nash as she reached out to the poorest of the poor. She took us to the safe haven the Army had created for street urchins in a three-room apartment on one of the typical dark back alleys of Moscow. But once inside, it was a paradise for kids. There, after eating a nutritious hot meal, they could lie down on clean beds and sleep the sleep of children without worrying.

In St. Petersburg we met Jeff and Sandi Ryan, young lieutenants from Canada, both fluent in Russian even though they had been there only two years. As soon as they arrived in St. Petersburg, Jeff and Sandi began working with one of the hospitals that was caring for children with AIDS. Today the AIDS wing of this hospital has been refurbished by funds provided by the Salvation Army in Norway. Two Russian Salvationists still work with the children, helping care for them. Ten years later Jeff and Sandi were in south Russia in Rostov-on-Don, where they conducted feeding programs for people who lived at the town dump. Many of the children are now attending the Salvation Army church services. A day program seeks to help children with cerebral palsy develop to their full potential. Two teams of volunteers spend time with little patients facing long-term treatment for cancer—playing games, doing crafts, reading, or simply sitting beside their beds. Oh yes, Jeff and Sandi adopted a Russian child who is HIV positive.

"These Are My Children"

As one who knows the Republic of Georgia well, Salvation Army officer Sherry McWhorter writes, "It is absolutely impossible for me to go anywhere without seeking out the orphans, the homeless and thrown-away kids, the truly orphaned, the lonely, and the lost." Says Sherry, "These are the children of my soul. People who know my family have urged me not to take in any more kids. Well, it is too late for that! Now I have 90, from little blonde Russians to dark Abkhazians. It hurts to be taken away from your family and your home. It hurts to be sick and alone. It is frightening to see friends and playmates die in the bed beside yours. But now someone cares. Someone is here with warm sweaters and coats. These are my children."

The Kyiv Orphan Shelter

For three years the Salvation Army has been ministering to some 150 homeless children in the Kyiv Orphan Shelter. When we tried to organize Sunday school for them, it was discovered that even the 12- to 13-year-olds were unable to read. They did not even know their colors, letters, or numbers. The Corps officers organized a preschool class for 20 children to prepare them to enter the first grade, hiring two teachers. Providing supplementary food and vitamins, they continue to work with these children. In September 1998, eight of the children successfully entered the first grade class in a neighborhood school. They went off dressed in proper clothing, wearing proper shoes, with notebooks and all the things necessary to start studying. By the end of September, teachers reported that the knowledge of the eight shelter children was greater than most of the others from normal home environments, proving that they were not and never had been mentally deficient.

In 1999 my husband and I were privileged to see how this program had expanded and was now recognized by Ukraine's State Education Department with a full-time program director and a psychologist to follow the mental and psychological development of the children. In March 2000 a class was started to enable students to join fifth-, sixth-, or seventh-grade classes in the neighborhood school. With part-time teachers on staff for sports and socialization activities, it is going very well. The mayor, the president's wife, and the head of the Education Department have visited the shelter many times.

Worthless or Extraordinary?

The registration brochure for the National Summit for Children at Risk says it well: "Help a Child . . . Impact a Nation." Last year my daughter was working on a master's degree at the University of Kentucky, doing some student teaching along with her studies. One of the girls at Kentucky's Jessamine County High School had a W carved on her arm. She told my daughter it stood for "Worthless,"

"It is absolutely impossible for me to go anywhere without seeking out the orphans, the homeless and thrown-away kids. These are the children of my soul."

"because that's what my mother calls me every day." Friends, that represents a curse in the life of this girl. Conversely, there is a little two-year-old living now in the U.S. in Georgia, a Russian girl adopted one year ago. When asked, "Are you an ordinary girl?" she replies, "No, I'm an extraordinary girl!" That is a blessing.

Nigerian poet, novelist, and short-story writer Ben Okri writes, "Children betray nations. Or they redeem them. They reveal them. They show what is good; what is true; what is pure; what to strive for." That is the purpose of the National Summit for Children at Risk, to show the world what is good,

true, pure, what to strive for, and what God desires for nations and for families. Following the example of the Lord Jesus, may we together discover better and more effective ways to open our arms wide, beckoning the many children at risk to come. May we scoop them up, put our hands upon them, and bless them fervently in Jesus' name. ♦

Kay F. Rader is a Commissioner in the Salvation Army and former World President of Women's Organizations. Her husband, Paul, former Salvation Army General, is now president of Asbury College, Wilmore, KY.

Networking to Address the Need

Ron Braund

No doubt we all want to make a difference. What can we learn from the experience of Nehemiah in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem in terms of making a difference? And how is Nehemiah's experience in Jerusalem like our experience with children in Russia and Eastern Europe? Let me suggest several parallels. First, Israel's Babylonian captivity parallels the plight of families in the former Soviet Union. It lasted some 70 years, and the rule of Communism and atheism was about 70 years. Rebuilding the walls, to me, represents the establishment of new boundaries for physical and emotional security for children and their families.

Unity, cooperation, and a shared vision were the means for success for Nehemiah, and are for us. Nehemiah learned that much can be accomplished with a God-ordained call and a servant spirit. And for those of us with a heart for children in crisis, God's

call and a servant spirit can spell significant work to meet the needs of street children and orphans. The Bible says, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10).

People often ask me, "What is God's will for my life?" But I stopped praying for God's will in this way years ago. Often people think God's will is a maze that must be run, but I have found that "the mind of a man plans his way and the Lord directs his steps" (Proverbs 16:9). This is a wonderful verse for me because I have no problem planning. Maybe we can do as Nehemiah did—build walls of security so that children in crisis can come to the point of true worship of the living Lord. ♦

Ron Braund is cofounder and president of Mission Specialties, Atlanta, GA.

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An Epidemic of Hopelessness Among Children at Risk in Eastern Europe

Susan Hillis

Russian children fill my life. They are my family, my ministry, and my professional work. I work for the Centers for Disease Control and I want to share about an emerging epidemic of hopelessness in Eastern Europe. I want to share with you first how the Lord gave me a concern in this area; second, evidence of an emerging epidemic; and third, what we as believers can do to put an end to it.

Coming to Terms with the Loss of a Son

It is hard to say whether it is more difficult for a parent to lose a child or for a child to lose a parent. From my perspective, both are equally difficult. I am a parent who lost one of my children in a car wreck. About four years ago my family was on a bike ride

when our son rode out in front of a car and was killed before our eyes. What a loss like this does to a parent or a child is beyond words. After Johnny died a very big part of me died with him. I really struggled with the Lord about this because I am outgoing and optimistic by nature, but I became very reclusive. It would have been very difficult for me several years ago to have had a conversation with anyone I did not know because the simple question "How many children do you have?" would have forced me to reveal some of my deepest pain. In my grief I actually became a different person. Because of loved ones lost, I think many children at risk, who need the Lord's love, change dramatically from what the Lord created them to be.

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As Jenya Haps notes in her presentation on family transition centers, children who have had very negative experiences, when placed in an environment where they experience the Lord's love, can blossom and become what God meant them to be. In New York City, while on a business trip, I too had a similar experience of the Lord's power to heal. I was in my hotel room one night about 15 months after Johnny had died, struggling with the Lord and yearning for healing. The Holy Spirit said to me, not audibly but certainly very clearly, "I am the one who raised Jesus from the dead, and that power of resurrection is the same power that I am going to use to heal the part of your heart that died with Johnny." For His glory and His praise, I can say that He did that in my life, and His work has been complete and permanent. I resolved then to be an instrument of that same healing in the lives of children.

Russian Adoptions

As a result in 1997 the Lord allowed my husband and me to adopt our first two Russian treasures, Anya and Alex. I love the verse, "Children are a treasure from the Lord." All my children know I love this verse. They hear me say it all the time. I get up each morning and call them my treasures. Anya, for a year after her adoption, cried almost every other night for her best friend, Katya. "Oh Mommy," she pleaded, "can't we please adopt her too?" So we began to pray for Katya and I began work assignments in Russia for the Centers for Disease Control. I began to visit Katya and learned that she had two wonderful brothers, Sasha and Vasya. Over a period of time, it became clear that the Lord was going to allow us to be their parents as well. So the Lord took what was a very hard situation for our family and ended up bringing me immense blessing. I praise Him for that.

Just as the Lord is our refuge, He calls us to be His lifeboats in the lives of children who need His love. The two greatest needs of children who are living either in orphanages or on the streets are to be part of the Lord's family and to be part of a temporal family. We need two families, an eternal one and a temporal one. What happens when these two greatest needs are not met, when children are not part of the Lord's family and they are not part of an earthly family? One consequence can be multiple epidemics. That is what my work at the Centers for Disease Control involves. Right now, as never before, the former Soviet Union is undergoing multiple epidemics of drug use, prostitution, HIV/AIDS, syphilis, hepatitis B, and tuberculosis. These last four are infectious diseases that are direct consequences of the epidemics of the first two—drugs and prostitution.

Epidemics in Multiples

Ignorance is widespread among many of the children about the dangers that result from drug use. In Moscow alone an estimated 50,000 young girls are

involved in prostitution. Their average age is 20 and all of them are educated. The problem is there are just no jobs. I know of one case of a physician who was making so little that she left medicine to enter prostitution. Perhaps 87 percent of the young girls who are entering prostitution are doing so because they are their families' sole source of income. According to a report published by the Carter Center in Atlanta, many Russian pimps actually go to orphanages where they know young girls are about to be released. They buy them train tickets to the city and force them into prostitution straight from the orphanage. Right now I am researching the epidemic of syphilis among young girls and pregnant women in Russia. It is of unprecedented proportions. One out of every hundred 17- and 18-year-old girls in Russia has syphilis. The treatment is very simple, just one injection of penicillin; but if it is not treated, 25 percent of the babies of mothers with syphilis will be born dead, and another 40 to 60 percent will develop mental retardation and major organ dysfunction. Right now 70 percent of the pregnant women who have syphilis are not getting any treatment during pregnancy for this disease. Seventy percent of their babies are being born with congenital syphilis, which could be totally preventable. Of these babies, 15 percent are being abandoned.

HIV/AIDS Looming

What about HIV? According to the World Health Organization, even though the total number of HIV/AIDS cases in Russia is still rather small, especially compared to many African nations, the rate of increase of HIV/AIDS in Russia is higher than any recorded increase in any other part of the world. Right now in South Africa, one out of every three children is an AIDS orphan. If something is not done to reverse this trend in Russia, in ten years I believe we will see the same development in Russia. I think the only thing that can change that probability is if believers stand together determined to be instruments of the Lord's hope in the middle of this tragic situation.

Orphanage Graduates: Responding to Their Dire Straits

About 15,000 children leave Russian orphanages each year, once they are 16 to 18 years old. Of these, 5,000 are unemployed, some 6,000 are homeless, around 3,000 resort to crime, approximately 1,500 commit suicide, and roughly half the girls are forced into prostitution. What can be done to curb these discouraging and burdensome figures and trends? Organizations and ministries need to work together more effectively. By working together in partnerships I think our corporate expression of love for these children can be greatly amplified. If we can cooperate even more than we are doing now, many more children in Russia will benefit. So I pray the Lord will allow us to work together more closely for the sake of children at risk whom He treasures. ♦

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Dr. Susan Hillis is an epidemiologist with the Centers for Disease Control, Atlanta, GA.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Jena Gaston and Mark Elliott, Compilers

Editor's Note: For valuable lists of links to organizations and reports dealing with post-Soviet orphans and street children, visit the following Web sites: Beeson Divinity School Global Center—<http://www.samford.edu/groups/global/links/childrenatrisk-ee>; Rainbows of Hope—<http://www.wec-international.org/rainbows/links.htm>; and Eastern European Adoption Coalition—wysiwyg://32/http://www.russianadoption.org/charity.htm.

CoMission for Children at Risk

www.comissionforchildren.com

The goal of the CoMission for Children at Risk (CCR) is to facilitate effective partnerships among Christ-centered organizations whose efforts can change the lives of orphans and street children around the world. This Web site supports an excellent Intranet service (<http://comission.intranets.com/>) for organizations and individuals with an interest in street children, orphanage sponsorship, post-orphanage transition centers, foster care, micro-enterprise development, summer camp programs, humanitarian aid/relief, adoption assistance, educational resources, and legislative reform. Plans are underway to place much of the CCR Intranet documentation on its Internet site.



Eastern European Adoption Coalition (EEAC)

<http://eeadopt.com>

This New Jersey-based organization, founded in 1996, has over 5,000 participants in a range of Internet discussion listservs. These "mailing lists," as EEAC calls them, cover Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Russia, Romania, Ukraine, post-adoption support, single adopters, and special needs issues. Its "Book Store" encompasses the culture and history of EEAC countries, as well as literature on adoption. The site is especially strong on medical and psychological data, research, and health care contacts relating to children adopted from Eastern Europe.



The European Children's Trust

www.everychild.org

The Web site of this London-based charity stresses alternatives to institutionalization of children at risk in post-Soviet societies. Find here all back issues of its informative newsletter, *Going Home*; Richard Carter's *The Silent Crisis: The Impact of Poverty on Children in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*, excerpted on the Global Center Web site; and a thorough, 52-page examination of children at risk in the Balkan's most impoverished state: Rachel Rowland's *New Opportunities: Improving Child-Care Services for Albania's Children* (November 2000).



Holt International Children's Services

www.holtintl.org

Holt, which pioneered inter-country adoptions in the United States beginning with Korean War orphans in the 1950s, hosts a Web site with a variety of helpful resources: the text and extensive commentary on the path-breaking Hague Convention on Inter-country Adoption; U.S. inter-country adoption statistics;

comprehensive listings and definitions for "Adoption Terminology" and "Positive Adoption Language"; Info-Updates, providing regular coverage of adoption news; descriptions of Holt projects in Romania and Russia, including a \$4.2 million USAID-funded program "Assistance to Russian Orphans"; and in collaboration with Amazon.com, a well-stocked bookstore with descriptions and order information, organized under four headings: pre-adoption, post-adoption, children's books on adoption, and books on the cultural heritage of adoptees.



MiraMed Institute

<http://www.miramedinstitute.org>

MiraMed Institute, founded in 1991 by Seattle-based physician Dr. Juliette Engel, sponsors charitable projects and trips for the benefit of Russian orphanages and research on Russian children at risk. A sampling of especially noteworthy MiraMed efforts highlighted on its Web site include the MiraMed Independent Living Center in Moscow for 15- to 23-year-old orphans; Orphanage Job Training Enterprise Programs in Russia; and Ending the Sexual Trafficking of Girls (funded by the United Nations and USAID). Several reports based on MiraMed research on the sexual exploitation of women, including orphan graduates, may be downloaded from this Web site.



National Adoption Information Clearinghouse (NAIC)

www.calib.com/naic

Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, this attractive, award-winning site provides a wide array of practical information, including a fair amount specifically on inter-country adoptions from post-Soviet countries, or useful to individuals adopting from these countries. The NAIC Web site features 27 topical, annotated bibliographies with abstracts of books and articles (examples: "Post-Institutionalization and the Internationally Adopted Child" and "Attachment Disorder"); 32 fact sheets (examples: "Intercountry Adoption" and "Adopting a Child with Special Needs"); individual directories of agencies placing children from Russia (28), Romania (36), Bulgaria (24), and Latvia (8); Russian and East European adoption resources; a directory of adoption-related newsletters and magazines; and an impressive bibliographic database with search capacity (a keyword search using "Romania" identified 44 titles with abstracts, while use of "Russia" identified 28 citations (examples: "Risk and Protective Factors in Children Adopted from the Former Soviet Union," 2000, and "Adopting From Russia: A Language and Parenting Guide," 1999)). Also of interest is a list of famous adoptees (www.calib.com/naic/pubs/r_famous.htm).

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Internet Resources (cont. from page 7)

Reader's Guide to Adoption-Related Literature

<http://members.aol.com/billgage/lit-list.htm>

An outstanding, regularly updated, annotated bibliography of English-language commercial books (no government reports) on adoption. The compiler, William L. Gage, has divided the list by subject categories, including international adoption—general and juvenile (examples: John H. MacLean, *Russian Adoption: How to Adopt a Child from Russia, Ukraine, and Kasakstan* [sic], 2000, 283 pp., \$18.95 from amazon.com; and Sylvia Rohde, *Adoption is Okay*, 1999, 14 pp., \$14.95 from Tapestry Books, in English and Russian, for ages 3 to 10.)



Viva Network

www.viva.org

Viva Network (1994–), based in Oxford, England, facilitates and supports the formation of networks for Christians working with children at risk around the world. Its founder, Patrick McDonald, is the author

of *Reaching Children in Need* (Eastbourne, England: Kingsway Publications, 2000), published in the U.S. as *Children at Risk: Networks in Action* (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 2000). Viva Network's very impressive Web site includes over 100 short essays on subjects relating to children at risk, from "Addictions" to "Low Esteem" to "Street Life" to "War Victims"; hotlinks to relevant published news articles; a directory of agencies including name, full contact information, contact person, and purpose statement; an excellent resources directory with subheadings for public awareness tools, teaching resources, reports (30 listed on street children alone), planning aids, and books on the biblical basis for work with children at risk. Each entry includes an annotation, cost, and order information. Viva Network produces a quarterly, *Reaching Children at Risk* (£10/\$17 per year), and has published a *Trainer's Directory* and *Jobs for Life*, a manual on vocational training for children at risk. Viva Network also facilitated the formation in 1998 of the Oxford-based Council of International Children's Ministries (www.viva.org/cicm). ♦

Meeting the Needs of Russia's Children in Crisis

George Steiner

I am simply one who has been called by God to do something I enjoy a lot: serve people I love. In late 1994 I left the International Bible Society and made the decision that I would start Children's HopeChest with the help of Katya Celinina and Jenya Polonskaya [Haps]. My heart was deeply moved by the needs of kids coming out of orphanages in transition to independent living. There was no theoretical model out there for us to follow. So we have tried over the last six years to develop a model that we are comfortable replicating in other regions.

First, it is terribly important to understand God's heart of compassion. Throughout Scripture, over and over, God's love and care for people, especially those hurting, lonely, and at risk, are very evident. And as He is in us, so we are to be an extension of His compassion for a hurting world. Children's HopeChest works in two arenas: orphanage care and orphanage graduate care.

Troubling Statistics

In times of transition, without question, the elderly and the children suffer the most. In 1992 I was in Moscow when one of the first reports was published indicating that there were approximately 400,000 kids living in institutions. This was shocking to people both in and outside Russia. Everyone knew there were orphanages, but no one had any idea of the numbers. Unfortunately, today that number is

over 600,000, an increase of 50 percent over the last eight years. Sixty-five percent of orphanage graduates will end up in prostitution or petty crime. That is the burden that led to the founding of Children's HopeChest. Regardless of where institutionalized orphans are raised—whether in Latin America, Africa, Asia, Europe, or the U.S.—they are ill prepared for independent living. To me the most stunning statistic of all is that within the first two years after leaving an orphanage, 15 percent of Russian orphans commit suicide. It is the ultimate indicator of hopelessness, taking one's own life.

Humanitarian Aid

One of the bridges to longer-term service in Russia is the provision of basic necessities that are desperately needed. The distribution of humanitarian aid involves many obstacles: getting products into the country, weight limitations, bringing in supplies with volunteers, and changing customs restrictions. Once in the country, having a distribution plan and executing it effectively can be challenging. Regardless of all this, the aid is greatly appreciated by all concerned. With the help of Duane Zook from Josh McDowell Ministries, we have been providing humanitarian aid in containers, the first one having been delivered in January 1995. While this is not our ultimate goal, it does provide much needed help and is certainly a wonderful bridge builder.

To me the most stunning statistic of all is that within the first two years after leaving an orphanage, 15 percent of Russian orphans commit suicide.

Russians Involved

I have especially enjoyed involving Russians in outreach. There are a lot of potential volunteers who have hearts for children. Some simply need to become aware of the situation. Once caring Russians see the needs and meet the kids, they will do what they can with the limited resources they have. At a conference headed by Natalia Loginova, of To Russian Children With Love, I have been blessed and greatly encouraged listening to testimonies of Russians with almost no resources who are absolutely committed to serving orphans with God's love. I enjoy taking Russians to an orphanage for the first time. I can guarantee the response: "These kids are so normal." It is wonderful when they have an opportunity to have their eyes opened to see the needs and to respond accordingly. Natasha is a Moscow surgeon who visited five or six orphanages with us for three or four days. Since then she has gathered an incredible amount of humanitarian aid for them.

Building Trust

Pastor John Smith from western Pennsylvania is my mentor. Before I began this ministry he told me that 80 percent of ministry is "being there". How can we know someone's hurts if we are not there? How can we respond if we are not listening to their hurts? We have tried to be consistent with our outreach, but I think we are just beginning to understand the importance of being there. We are in the process of putting an office and ministry center in Vladimir and we are opening a ministry center in Kostroma.

Many stories circulate in Russia about American Christians who come to town, hold evangelistic rallies, take pictures, and leave. Unfortunately, many ministries that came to Russia in 1991 and 1992 are no longer there. Some departed for good reasons, but others simply did not commit to stay through difficult days. We need to be people committed to

following through on our promises. Trust-building is never ending.

Building Partnerships

For Children's HopeChest one of the most thrilling developments over the last six years has been partnering. We have partnered on numerous projects with Buckner Adoption and Maternity Services. It has not been without challenges, but we both believe that more kids have been blessed and both organizations are stronger as a result of our linking arms. If we are working in an area where there is a local church, it is important to discover whether there might be common goals with that church. The Wesleyan Church in Vladimir, for example, has key volunteers in our coffee house outreach. In addition, several orphanage graduates worship at the Wesleyan Church. And a local Orthodox congregation in Vladimir is very involved in our coffeehouse project as well.

Fund Raising with Integrity

We need God's blessing in all areas of ministry, including resource development. My background is major donor development, but frankly, I do not consider myself a professional. My philosophy is pretty simple: fundraising is a lot like evangelism. It is our job to share the gospel and it is the Holy Spirit's job to move on people's hearts. We have to be careful not to build up unrealistic expectations. I remind our staff frequently that we need to under-promise and over-deliver. We need to be careful not to exaggerate with our donors as well. When I look at a video that we produce, I ask, "Are we exploiting others to generate funds?" I believe it says a lot about us and our values when we care enough to protect the dignity of those we serve. ♦

George Steiner is president of Children's HopeChest, Palmer Lake, CO.

We need to be people committed to following through on our promises. Trust-building is never ending.

Orphanage Assistance

Tanya Vinogradova

I was not a Christian when a U.S. CoMission team of the Mission Society for United Methodists came to Khabarovsk, Siberia, and asked me to teach Russian. God just showed me Christ through all the people in this group. I made a commitment to Christ and I asked Rev. Jack Stevenson from the CoMission team to baptize me. Since then I have worked with this team in Khabarovsk.

Mutual Blessings

Several years ago I started going to orphanages and my heart was changed. Once there, it is impossible not to help. When we give something or when we

do something for children, I keep thinking what a blessing it is for them, but then I realize that I cannot bless them more than they bless me. They are so loving and so wonderful, and a lot of them are like family to me. I just want to take them all home or find homes for them.

I have two friends and roommates, American women from the Mission Society for United Methodists, who work with me in developing personal relationships with girls in the orphanages. In one we work with ten older girls who are wonderful. I feel like a proud mother, with beautiful,

(continued on page 10)

Several years ago I started going to orphanages and my heart was changed. Once there, it is impossible not to help.

Orphanage Assistance (cont. from page 9)

amazing, loving girls. We started going once every week or two to develop relationships with them. We have taken them shopping and to our house for dinner. We buy them makeup and clothes. We are also concerned about their future.

Job Skills and Self Esteem

We thought that if we could help them develop some skills, perhaps it would help them in the future. So we started a sewing project, asking the girls if they would help us sew sheets for infants in orphanages. We probably could have purchased the sheets and not spent much more, but we wanted to see how they would respond. One of the girls who expressed interest was probably the most selfish girl at the orphanage—or appeared to be the most selfish. She does not behave well, she likes to smoke, and she likes the boys. Nevertheless she said, “You do so much for us, we can at least do something for these babies.” We still decided to pay her because we thought it might help her learn how to use her own money. The girls then volunteered to knit socks, so we started paying them five rubles for a sheet and ten rubles for socks. It is wonderful to take them shopping when they take their own money and not ours. Once when we took the girls shopping, the boys said it was not fair, so we arranged to take the boys, but to play computer games instead of shopping—or on top of shopping.

We started going to a baby orphanage in 1999. I am not a mother yet and I was scared because I did

not know if I could pick babies up. I thought that they were going to break in my hands. We now go once a week and feed them, change them, and clean them. Each one of us is especially attached to one of the babies. I am particularly pleased because older orphans are doing things for orphaned babies. When people visit for the first time they have to prepare themselves because it is heartbreaking to see all those abandoned infants lying in their cribs. They are not even picked up when they are being fed. The workers are not bad people as I used to think. The problem is there are 30 babies and only two nurses for each 24-hour period. They just are not capable of doing more.

Quilts for Infant Orphans

We have another lady on our team who gathers women together to make quilts. Our goal now is to make a quilt for each infant orphan. Russians do not understand orphanage work—why anyone would help someone else’s baby?—so it is hard to involve them in this ministry. But through quilting, women learned about the babies for the first time and now take quilts to the hospital with us. At first, some of them were upset by what they saw, but now they want to help. ♦

Tanya Vinogradova, from Khabarovsk, Siberia, is the orphanage project coordinator for The Mission Society for United Methodists, Norcross, GA.

A major obstacle to the growth of foster care in Russia—or anywhere—is politics, because foster care threatens the livelihood of orphanage workers.

Foster Care for Russian Orphans

Mike Douris

Buckner International Adoption and Maternity Services was founded in Dallas, Texas, in 1879 to provide help to post-Civil War orphans. It now has some 1,000 employees working across Texas in childcare programs, residential and foster care, counseling, and both domestic and international adoption. Buckner Orphan Care International provides services to children in Romania, Russia, China, and in the near future, Africa.

A Buckner—Children’s HopeChest Partnership

In launching our first transitional living centers in Russia, we partnered with Children’s HopeChest in the Vladimir Region. We provided curricula and training for HopeChest staff and house parents and distributed humanitarian aid through volunteer trips. We also help with orphanage improvement and renovation. When society provides nice facilities for children, what it communicates to them is that people truly care for them. Almost all orphanage workers in Russia really care about the kids, but because of economic conditions the orphanages themselves are often in need of many improvements. So when we

make improvements in a facility, what those kids see is that people care enough about them to provide them with a nice building. Conditions were awful the first time I visited Technical School 26 in the Vladimir Region, which has orphans as boarding students. The building had no heat in freezing weather, the showers worked poorly, conditions were unsanitary, the lighting was depressing, and sinks had no faucets. Children’s HopeChest and Buckner combined resources to pay for a boiler, so they now have heat.

From Laundries to Bible Studies to Shoes

We also build playgrounds and laundries in Romania and Russia. Right now we are renovating several laundries, which are a big deal when workers are washing clothes by hand for 200 children in an orphanage. This is a huge problem for the directors. We have been fortunate enough to partner with laundry equipment companies that are helping us in this project. We also help fund orphanage program development and foster care services as well as provide training and curricula for these programs. In addition, we host camps for about 1,400 orphans each summer

with the help of U.S. churches, which staff the camps. We have discipleship staff on site, and we do small group Bible stories with the kids after the volunteer teams leave. On mission trips we provide medical supplies and equipment, clothing, developmental toys, food, and shoes. In 1999 we collected 20,000 pairs of new shoes for kids in Russia, and in 2000, 50,000 pairs. We have groups going to Russia and Romania delivering shoes. One might not think that putting a new pair of shoes on a child's feet would be a moving experience, but it really is.

Introducing Foster Care

Our foster care programs started in 1997 at Lakinsk Orphanage in partnership with Children's HopeChest. At a conference in Vladimir I presented the concept of foster care, which was received warmly. It took approximately a year to develop the program, establish policies and procedures, and translate training curriculum. When children are removed from their natural family, everything else is second best. In contrast, placing children in an institution involves the most restrictive level of care. Foster care is a better system because children remain in a family environment and receive more individual attention compared to an orphanage. Infants especially receive more individual attention in contrast to baby rooms in orphanages with two workers having to care for 20 babies. There also is potential for adoption by foster care parents. In addition, foster care reduces dependency and helps children become part of a community and develop a safety net within that community.

Ultimately foster care is cheaper because the government does not have to build more orphanages. One orphanage we have worked with had about 60 children, but now, because of foster care and transitional living centers, that orphanage has 20 children. In another orphanage with 50 children, we placed 20 in foster care and now 30 children are in a building designed for 30. A major obstacle to the growth of foster care in Russia—or anywhere—is politics, because foster care threatens the livelihood of orphanage workers. If foster care expands, fewer institutional workers are needed, so sometimes expanding foster care meets with resistance.

Choosing and Training Foster Families

A key element in foster care is extensive and careful interviewing of potential foster families. One of the dangers of foster care is the possibility of placing a child in a home that will be abusive. For that reason, in the beginning we used workers in the orphanage as foster families because they knew the children and we knew them well. In order to have good checks and balances for the safety of the children, we established a comprehensive training program for foster families, almost 50 hours in the beginning, plus ongoing training every year. We also have very low caseworker-to-child ratios, one worker for every ten

homes. In Russia Buckner makes frequent visits to foster homes, at least once or twice a week. After foster care most of the children attend and graduate from a tech school. On holidays or weekends, whenever they can, they come back to their foster family and it becomes part of who they are. However, children with separation issues and attachment disorders do better in group settings than in foster care. So not every child is appropriate for foster care. Staff need to be trained in identifying children who are appropriate for foster care. Matching the right foster family with the right child is key.

Nastya illustrates the difference a foster home can make. When we first met, she would not look me in the eye once. Her face was on the floor and she would barely shake my hand. Then when I first visited her in her new foster home, she ran up to me and gave me a big hug and was talking away, a tremendous difference in this child because she received the individual attention that she needed.

Helping One Child at a Time

I would like to conclude with an illustration of how we can make a difference. We were working with a teenager who was about to turn 16. She was Russian-African, born after the 1980 Olympics in Moscow and abandoned by her mother. The orphanage director told us that this child had no future in Russia and asked if we could find her a family in the West. We did find a single parent who adopted her and enrolled her in a private school in Dallas. Later, this young lady invited me to her high school graduation. As the date approached, I thought to myself that she probably would not miss me. I was tired, it was raining, and the traffic was terrible. But then I realized I needed to go; she had taken the time to write me a note, so I needed to be there. As soon as I walked into the room she saw me and the expression on her face made me realize that the effort I took was well worth it. She was so happy to see me. I was not ready for the emotions I felt when she walked across that stage. I started crying and thought to myself, "There is one; there is one who was saved." She graduated that day and now is a student at Baylor University. Looking at all the children we work with and the overwhelming problems, I know I cannot help them all. But we can help those God puts in our view. Our ministry is about helping one child at a time. ♦

Mike Douris is vice president/COO for Buckner International Adoption and Maternity Services, Dallas, TX.

Looking at all the children we work with and the overwhelming problems, I know I cannot help them all. But we can help those God puts in our view. Our ministry is about helping one child at a time.

Street kids, so rough on the outside, in their art open up and are children again.

Microenterprise Development for Children at Risk

Masha Suzdaleva

Mission Specialties has a small project in St. Petersburg that we started in 1998. It is a byproduct of another project that allowed the Easter story to be shared in hundreds of Russian orphanages. Children competed in a crafts and essay contest on the theme of Easter. We received many hundreds of entries from orphans all over Russia. A committee in Moscow selected ten winners whose grand prize was a trip to Atlanta for three weeks. But some children who submitted large, beautifully painted Easter eggs were not eligible for the simple reason that they lived in a St. Petersburg juvenile detention center. We were so touched and so impressed, we wanted to do something to reward them. During my winter visit in 1999, I went to this juvenile detention center and saw that these boys are truly gifted. Street kids, so rough on the outside, in their art open up and are children again.

We thought of ways we might encourage and reward their talent, not just in words of praise or diplomas, but in some material way. We asked the artists working with the boys to encourage them to continue painting eggs, which we would then buy as gifts for our donors. Each of the boys has a personal account and the money is given to them when they leave the institution. Psychologically it has shown the boys that they can make something worthwhile with their hands and that stealing is not the only way to make money in this life. There may be other ways to distribute such crafts, either by sale or perhaps by auction. ♦

Masha Suzdaleva, a native of Novosibirsk, Siberia, is on the staff of Mission Specialties, Atlanta, GA.

Transition Centers for Orphanage Graduates

Jenya Polonskaya Haps

Children's HopeChest

In 1994 Children's HopeChest was founded to provide practical help and God's hope to Russian orphans. We started in the Vladimir Region and expanded to the Kostroma Region in 1999. Currently in the two regions we are ministering to 2,500 children from ages four to eighteen. We have developed a holistic approach to address the physical, medical, emotional, educational, and spiritual needs of the children. First, we seek to ease the lives of children in the orphanages by providing humanitarian aid, by bringing containers of food, clothes, shoes, and medical supplies, and by doing construction, remodeling orphanage buildings, including showers and bathrooms.

Another main focus in our ministry is to touch the hearts of the children. We have several programs that address spiritual life: summer and winter camps, vacation Bible studies, and discipleship programs that help children understand Christian values and apply them in their lives. We provide libraries and computers to the orphanages that help children with educational and career options. We also sponsor art contests and sports events. In addition, through our ministry American churches "adopt" orphanages,

providing wonderful opportunities for involvement in the lives of children. Assistance to older orphans through transitional family centers is another approach that we have developed. Finally, we establish coffeehouses and programs for orphans who are enrolled in technical schools.

Orphanage Graduates at Risk

Since the very start of our ministry in Russia we have been concerned with orphanage graduates. From the beginning directors, administrators, educators, and children came to us with sad stories about graduates. Russian officials have documented that 70 percent turn to crime and 10 to 15 percent commit suicide. Most become homeless, few find jobs, and 80 percent of orphan graduate marriages fail. This shows the scope and the depth of the problem. For many years it was believed that an orphanage could substitute for a family. But recent findings by psychologists have shown that what actually happens is that one risk is replaced by another. The risk of being abandoned or abused is replaced by the risk of institutional deprivation, dependency, attachment disorders, and physical and mental delays.

What Children Do Not Learn in Orphanages

Unfortunately, children do not have the opportunity to develop life skills in orphanages—how to do grocery shopping, how to budget, how to take care of their bodies, how to do laundry, and other practical skills. Nor do orphanages help to develop social skills. Almost 90 percent of orphanage workers are women, so children do not see the positive role of men in life, the relationship between wife and husband, or between adults and children. They do not experience any type of family relationship. Children do not see examples of conflict resolution because orphanage workers do not resolve their differences in front of the children. Orphans divide the world between themselves and everyone else. In many ways the outside world is to them alien and hostile.

Orphan graduates do not know how to find a job; and even if they are helped to find a job, they lack the skills to keep the job. They feel dependent all the time and they need to be guided. Low self-esteem is a very common characteristic of orphans. The children also often develop antisocial behavior, including cheating, stealing, and hazing. Then when they have to leave the institution, they do not have the support of a family or a church. There are no social services that will help these children succeed and find their place in life.

Family Centers for Older Orphans

When we started in 1994 we felt these children needed help in the transition to independent living through a safe, protective, family-based environment that would give them time and professional help in order to become productive and successful. It took Children's HopeChest almost two years to develop legal guidelines, policies, and procedures to purchase housing for two transitional family centers, and to recruit and train house parents. The goal of the family center is to help children develop practical and social skills in order to help them integrate into society to become productive and successful, and to learn how to create healthy families, in this way stopping the cycle of orphanhood. The family center is a group of five to eight young people, 14- to 23-years-old living in a large family environment for a period of one to four years. It is very important that the family, both parents and children, be supported by a team of professionals.

In the fall of 1998 we started our first family center, specifically geared toward boys with developmental challenges. Some of the boys came from orphanages for children with learning disabilities. The specific needs of these children helped us develop the focus for the program that is geared toward simple country life and farm work. The eight boys in this family center learn such trades as carpentry, electrical or mechanical work, cooking, and farming. We purchased an apartment and a garden plot for this family. They learn how to grow vegetables, how to can food for the winter, and how to care for animals, which also helps with attachment

disorders. We also believe it is an essential part of life to be connected to a church. There is a small Orthodox church in that settlement, and the boys volunteer their time and labor every day to help restore that church. The priest from this church lives in the same apartment block as the family center, and these boys are the only people from the community who actually volunteer their time to restore the church.

The second family center, adjacent to an orphanage, was created for higher potential girls. They will continue their education to become accountants, educators, secretaries, nurses, and veterinarians. Members of the Wesleyan Church in Vladimir come to this family center and orphanage on a weekly basis. The girls, as well as the boys from the other nearby family center, participate in all the events that the Wesleyan Church provides for them. We also have an American missionary as a staff member of Children's HopeChest who conducts discipleship programs with the children in the family centers.

The Value of the Family Setting

I would like to emphasize the role the family plays in the lives of the children in this critical transition. It is only in the family setting that we can learn how to be a mother and wife, a father and husband, and how to interact as husband and wife. It is only in the family that we can learn how to love and care for children. By living in the family setting, orphans develop family skills that help stop the cycle of orphanhood. Children who learn healthy family relationships will then be able to create their own healthy families. Children have opportunities to do what any normal family does: take care of themselves, take care of others, cook, and do laundry. They develop social skills as parents resolve their conflicts in front of the children. The children have an opportunity to develop relationships with their neighbors and with the community. In fact, the families are part of the community.

Professional Help

One very important component of success is the professional team that assists each family center, consisting of the orphanage director, orphanage workers, social and medical workers, and the orphanage psychologist. The children, though they live in the family center, are still part of the orphanage, so they benefit from what the orphanage can provide. Of course, the surrogate parents are part of the team, as well as the child protective services inspector. So the transitional family center has become a new type of family-based care. It has strong support from governmental agencies. The state provides money for food and clothes and helps place the children in schools.

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Orphanage graduates at risk—70 percent turn to crime; most become homeless; few find jobs; and 80 percent of orphan graduate marriages fail.

Ivan was diagnosed with mental disability and had been a frequent runaway. His orphanage director had little hope for his future. But in just two years in our program Ivan made remarkable progress.

Meeting the Needs (cont. from page 13)

Guidelines, Policies, and Training from Scratch

Another advantage of the family center is that the house parents are trained for the job. This training is very important because caring for teenage orphans is very different from raising one's own children, and very different from caring for teenagers in general. Institutionalized teenagers have very specific needs. We train house parents to meet those needs to the best of their ability. The family center has the support of a partnership between a non-governmental organization and governmental agencies. Children's HopeChest is officially registered in Russia as the Nadezhda Fund. This charity, which means "hope" in Russian, initiated, developed, and monitors the program of the transitional family centers. Being a new program in the regions where we work, we had to develop legal guidelines, policies, and procedures in partnership with the regional department of education. There are special requirements for the caseworker, who is more than just a practicing psychologist. This person needs special understanding of both teenagers and institutionalized children because these young people have specific needs that are very different from just teenagers or just institutionalized children. Since it is difficult to find such a specialist in a small town or region, as a solution we train caseworkers for the position. In the family centers we decided to make conditions better than average to help these children aim higher. They will have a model of a better life and they will have something to hope for and something to strive for.

The Critical Choice of House Parents

Another challenge is to find the right families to work with the children in this program. We need two couples per center, one for weekdays and a relief couple for weekends, special occasions, and holidays. Parents cannot work seven days a week, 24 hours a day, 12 months a year. We have set very high criteria for the parents. Because they will be living with the children every day and the children will look up to them, these couples need to be very positive role models. House parents have to be Christians, have to be emotionally secure, have to be in good health, and, of course, should have no history of child abuse. They must have some professional experience in working with children and they must be able to work well with the whole team serving the family center. They have to be over 35 years old. Sometimes I am asked to consider younger couples with their own children. Wouldn't it be good for orphans living in the family center to see how a young family takes care of its children? Not really. The age difference is helpful so that the children will look up to their parents as parents, not as buddies. They need to learn respect for people who are old enough to be their parents. Also, we would like to avoid possible conflicts between the foster children in the family center and the biological children of the house parents. We only accept couples

whose children are already grown or who have no children.

In selecting house parents we depend upon word-of-mouth networking and TV, radio, and newspaper advertisements. After receiving applications, we provide questionnaires to couples. At that level we screen families for health issues, criminal background, and their motivation. Next we conduct initial interviews with couples, individually and together. The couples then are required to complete 36 hours of training before we make a final decision. What parents learn during the training helps them understand the program. It helps them to ask questions that they might never have asked themselves before and it gives them a chance to back out in some cases. After training we conduct final interviews and select couples. Some may wonder why 36 hours of training is necessary. Why so long? So many issues have to be covered. They learn how to deal with anger and aggression and children who are grieving from separation and abandonment. They learn how to manage children in crisis without aggravating the situation and how best to communicate with children at risk. They learn how to develop trust and how to establish interpersonal boundaries. Understanding the need to clarify family rules is also part of the training.

Choosing the Right Children for the Program

Selecting children is also an important issue. The program is not geared toward just any child. We recommend avoiding children with severe mental and physical challenges. Children in orphanages may be grouped into three categories: first, children who have mild emotional disturbances but who are motivated and want to succeed; second, children with borderline mental challenges and serious learning disabilities; and third, children who require treatment for severe mental problems. The best children to choose for transitional family centers are in the first category. Sometimes it can work to choose children from the second category, provided they are very cooperative and really want to succeed. This is why cooperation is such a key point in this work. Transition centers require teamwork, and the child is part of that team.

The Individual Development Plan

A primary tool for success in this program is an individual development plan for each child that is developed and monitored by a caseworker. Every member of the team that works with a child evaluates and gives approval for each individual plan. The team explains the individual treatment plan to the child, who also signs the agreement. This individual plan or contract states goals and the means for reaching those goals. This plan has various components, including spiritual, health, emotional, behavioral, social, and educational. By means of the transition center and the individual plan we expect young people to develop the ability to make confident and positive decisions,

to develop social and independent living skills, and to learn how to form healthy families with healthy family relationships.

A Success Story

I would like to share a success story from our transition centers. Ivan (not his real name) came into our program when he graduated from an orphanage in the Vladimir Region. He was diagnosed with mental disability and had been a frequent runaway. His orphanage director had little hope for his future.

But in just two years in our program Ivan made remarkable progress. He studied cooking at a technical school, and after two years in the program was able to find a job as a cook close to the family center. He developed good relationships with the other employees and now works as a cook in a Moscow hospital. He also has accepted Christ as his Savior and has been baptized. ♦

Jenya Polonskaya Haps is the HealthHope Manager for Children's HopeChest and lives in Warrenville, IL.

Reaching Out to Street Children

Phyllis Kilbourn

Rainbows of Hope has the privilege of working in 16 countries across Asia, Latin America, Africa, and Eastern Europe. We work with abused and battered children with deep psychological traumas. This, of course, includes children who are living on the streets. We praise the Lord that we are able to reach out and touch these children. I think this is one of the most exciting developments in missions today.

The Liberian Civil War

I worked in Liberia for 20 years. During the Liberian Civil War, which began in 1989, I saw tremendous abuse of children for the first time in my life. I saw children as young as five taken into the army, trained to fight, shoot, and kill. I saw schoolgirls who had watched their mothers violently raped and hacked to death, who were in turn raped and left to bear the children of their attackers. As I saw this horrific treatment of children, God's blessed gifts, my heart was very burdened.

My original vision was to return to Liberia to start Rainbows of Hope, but I could not get back in the country. As a result, the Lord began to broaden my understanding of what was going on with children around the world. The Lord has taken me to 35 countries to examine what is being done to help street children. Many are AIDS orphans and most are forced into child labor or are sexually exploited. They serve as a visible and unattractive reminder of the failure of society to care for and protect its most vulnerable members.

As never before, God is giving us an opportunity as a church to respond to the needs of children. I think of how God has said through the psalmist that children have been given to us as His best gift. So how have we allowed them to be exploited for the lust and greed of criminals? This is exactly what has happened. Society has failed, officials have failed, but the church cannot fail. In the summer of 2000 a United Nations representative came to our project in Zambia as the HIV/AIDS epidemic was sweeping the nation. His conclusion was that only the church could give a meaningful response to the plight of

HIV/AIDS children. So we are hearing this even from secular groups, recognizing the role of the church in ministry to our children.

Loving-Kindness is Bread with Jam

I think of Mother Theresa who said, "Children are hungry not only for bread but for understanding and love. They're naked not only of clothing but of human dignity that has been stolen from them." To think of street children as good for nothing is the greatest injustice of all. The church can respond because we have the mandate and the compassion to do so. I think of a Canadian working with a group of Latin American street children. When he asked them to define loving-kindness, one little boy said, "Sir, if I am hungry and you give me bread, that is kindness, but if you put jam on it, that is loving-kindness." As Christians we can put jam on our caregiving. That is what God is calling us to do; that is our unique role. We have that compassion. We have the gospel, which ultimately will be the only hope for street children. In Rainbows of Hope we claim Jeremiah 29:11 for our children: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Restoration

After children in crisis have endured a traumatic experience, the first stage of intervention is restoration of their immediate needs. Before psychological help or spiritual nurture can be provided, recovery from the basic losses they have suffered is a necessity. They need food, shelter, and someone in their lives to love them. If a child has lost a mother to death, we cannot restore her to life, but we can provide a significant caregiver who will give motherly nurture and love. It is also necessary to rescue the children from exploitation, which has robbed them of trust, self-acceptance, and moral development. Making good these losses requires long-term care and intervention strategies.

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Prevention

Prevention is our first line of defense. We have found in St. Petersburg, Russia, for example, that one of the biggest problems is that parents have lost hope. In this city at least half of the 40,000 to 70,000 street children are true orphans; the other half could go home if they did not have abusive parents who come home, hit the bottle at night, and beat their children. The kids find it much better to sleep in a sewer pipe. It was in St. Petersburg that I first went into the sewers to look for children. It is not a very pleasant place at all—the smell, the stench. We realized if we were going to have an authentic ministry with these children, our first line of defense was to work with the parents. We are doing a number of projects with local churches, with Russian Christian families “adopting” alcoholic families.

We feel God wants children back with their families. So we want to make nurturing families for the children, empowering parents as a line of prevention. We have mothers come to our street children center once a week. We let them come for the day to take classes with the children and to train them in a skill right along with the children. If the mothers do this, they can make a living and the children do not have to be on the streets. This is the area where I think most of us are weakest. We are so busy rescuing or restoring that we forget about prevention. If we do not focus on prevention, there will be a continual flood of street children. When we do not restore nurturing homes to vulnerable and powerless children, the mafia ensnares them in drugs and arms deals, prostitution, and pornography. The mafia constantly threatens our workers, trying to run them over in their big Mercedes Benzes.

The Need for Structure

When we rescue children who have been exploited and are living in surrogate gang families, we have the task of helping them recover from long-term losses. For example, we help these children develop trust. If they cannot trust people, I really doubt they can ever trust God. Children learn what God is like as their parents exhibit unconditional love and acceptance, forgiveness, belonging, responsibility, and all the values that come from the home. That is why parents are so very important in the lives of children.

Children lose all the structure in their lives when they fall prey to the streets. They lose home, family, community, school, and church, if they ever had these supports. Children develop best with structure in their lives. It is a natural form of discipline for them and this is how they grow. Nehemiah faced walls that were burned and gates that were broken down. He was not concerned about beauty, but about protection and safety. I see Jerusalem's burned walls and the broken gates as a picture of today's street children, products of dysfunctional families, poverty, and parents who are not there. God's plan is for

children to be in families. That is why Rainbows of Hope places children in family group homes with house parents, helping homeless kids restore the vital structures of community, school, and church.

No Quick Fixes

Street children cope with fear, insecurity, abandonment, sexual abuse, and totally degrading exploitation. While we try to address physical and medical needs, as we must, we cannot forget the deep psychological wounds these children bear. Imagine a five-year-old child created in the image of God saying, “I am nobody's nothing.”

Meeting the needs of street children is not a quick fix. Instead, it requires responsible, compassionate, multifaceted, and well-coordinated intervention. To succeed, networking is all-important. We have to provide alternatives so that no child ever has to return to a sewer pipe or brothel. What can we do in the economic collapse and poverty? We know, of course, that training for jobs that do not exist is useless. So in St. Petersburg we spent a whole summer asking businesses what we could do to train 14- to 18-year-old street children to make them employable. Every company said computer skills. If the children could gain computer skills, they could find jobs. The Lord has enabled us to open a computer school. We are trusting that we will be able to put many of these children into jobs, giving them an alternative to the streets. We also are trying to establish a farm outside St. Petersburg that, again, will keep children off the streets. Prevention is continuous, even with rehabilitated children.

Rescue, One Step at a Time

Typically, the biggest problem with ministry to street children is that we want to rescue them this instant. Many ministries become discouraged because they try to place street kids into 24-hour, structured care and it just does not work. The children end up running away. We have to rebuild trust, and that is where our drop-in center helps. Street children can come and go while at the same time rebuilding structure in their lives with schedules and routines as simple as breakfast only at 8 a.m. and lunch only at 12 p.m. Certainly, it is difficult to have to turn children away because they have not obeyed rules, but we must do this for their own benefit. There is no way children can continue with their education or anything else unless they rebuild structure in their lives. We begin simply by having a drop-in center and then a night shelter. We stay with the children and provide them with basic, nonformal education and vocational training. Besides computer training, we offer courses in auto mechanics, shoemaking, and shoe repair. We also teach independent living skills and personal money management.

Local Church Ownership

We insist absolutely that work with street children be tied to the local church and that the local church

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must own the project. In St. Petersburg we work with the International Church, a Pentecostal church, and a Baptist church. The poverty of church members is so great that many eat only every other day. Nevertheless, we feel they must have ownership. These are their children and God will bless them only if they care for them. We have each church take one day to feed the street children. That is a sacrifice because they really do not have enough food for themselves, but we feel it is essential that they help at some level. Our street children ministries now are totally nationalized and we have worked our way out of a job. We are basically funding the facilities. One of our goals, of course, is to make all of the projects self-supporting, but this will take time. This is our goal, but regarding facilities, we try to provide them, though it is a constant stretch of faith. In Russia we try never to set up a program that the local church cannot sustain, and for day-to-day ministry we depend upon it in every instance. We do not know when we may have to leave and we do not want any of our work to fall by the wayside.

Preparing the Soil

I am writing a course on work with street children with Pathfinders that will be translated and published in Russian. We seek to address those hindrances that keep children from accepting Christ and to explore ways to compensate for their immediate and long-term losses. If children are hungry, dirty, full of lice, or on drugs, how can they authentically listen to the gospel? We have a lot of work to do in preparing the soil for the seed to fall on good ground. We constantly have to prepare that ground, removing everything that would keep children from coming to Jesus. This is our goal in this holistic ministry.

Working Together

The task of guiding children from damaged childhoods to responsible adulthood is one that we all must assume in equal measure and with respect for each other's roles and contributions. This is the

beautiful part of the body of Christ. This is why we can have the answer because we can work together. To shift from a fragmented approach of service delivery to one that is integrated and holistic will require a willingness to forge partnerships and to enter into strategic alliances. This is the only way that we are going to optimize our resources.

One of the blessings of working with children is that we do not have competition from other groups. I wish we needed to fight over who is going to help the children of Russia. There are so many. We are talking literally about nations of children. There are twice as many street children living in Latin America as the entire population of Canada. We are looking at an overwhelming task.

I think of Hagar with her son Ishmael in the desert—a place of no provision. And I think of the church as Hagar in the wilderness (Genesis 16). In a desert place, Hagar felt there was no way to respond to the desperate need of life-giving water for her son. Not wanting to see her son die, Hagar placed Ishmael “under a bush, then went off to sit down, a bowshot away.” She sat there, hopelessly sobbing. While still in this overwhelming situation, God commissioned Hagar (verse 18) to “lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation.” After giving this commission, God then opened Hagar's eyes to see the well of water, God's provision for Hagar to care for the child. Likewise, God, who has given us this same commission, will provide the needed resources to enable us to care for wounded and exploited street children. We do not have to throw up our hands in despair; God will empower us to make a difference in their lives. Then we will witness God making them into a great nation. ♦

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Dr. Phyllis Kilbourn is the founding director of Rainbows of Hope, Fort Mill, SC, and editor of four books on children at risk: *Healing the Children of War*; *Children in Crisis*; *Street Children*; and *Sexually Exploited Children: Working to Protect and Heal* (www.marcpublications.com).

How Well Do Children Adopted from Eastern Europe Fare?

Mike Noah

Prospective adoptive families frequently ask how well adopted children adjust. The myriad of adoption stories families hear by word of mouth, on the Internet, or in other media run the range from wonderful to nightmarish. Anyone who is considering adoption wants to know that they are doing the right thing and that adopted children are doing well in their new families.

Rainbow House International Survey Results

A number of studies done over the last decade have addressed this issue. According to a 1998 Rainbow House International survey of 206 Russian and Eastern European adopted children, 73 percent were developmentally delayed at arrival. But after an average of 24 months in their homes, only 39 percent

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The only finding more remarkable than the damage caused by institutional neglect, say researchers now charting Romanian adoptees, is the ability of many children to overcome the setbacks once neglect ends.

Children Adopted (cont. from page 17)

were reported to have delays. The largest ongoing delay reported was speech and language (32 percent). Of the 21 attachment-resistive characteristics listed in this survey, 63 percent of adoptees were reported as having none of the characteristics, 91 percent had four or fewer, and 98 percent had six or fewer, showing that a majority had attached quite well to their adoptive families.

Cradle of Hope Survey Results

Cradle of Hope and 18 other U.S. adoption agencies mailed surveys to 2,159 families and received back 1,246 (a 57 percent return rate). The results, also reported in 1998, showed that 95 percent of families had experienced an overall positive adjustment. Ninety percent of the children younger than three and 72 percent older than three were reported to have very good attachment to their families. Approximately two years after placement, 95 percent exhibited no or only mild delays in motor skills, and 88 percent exhibited no or only mild delays in emotional maturity.

Surprising Resilience in Most Cases

The adverse effects of institutionalization on children's global development—physically, emotionally, medically, and psychologically—have been well documented. Developmental delays and attachment difficulties are highlighted in the above studies. Yet the only finding more remarkable than the damage caused by institutional neglect, say researchers now charting Romanian adoptees, is the ability of many children to overcome the setbacks once neglect ends. Case Western Reserve University professor of social work Victor Groza has been following more than 300 Romanian adoptees since 1992 and has found that 80 percent have already made up quite well for lost time. After the first year, says Groza, 20 percent had adapted so well it was all but impossible to distinguish them from typical children their age. An additional 60 percent showed subtle problems such as slower eye-hand coordination. In the 20 percent who fared worst, Groza found more long-lasting cognitive behavioral and emotional problems.

Lessons To Be Learned from Difficult Placements

I became interested in looking at children who continue to exhibit classic institutionalization signs and behaviors one to two years after placement, and what factors contribute to their being successful placements nonetheless. In preparation for two days of training for our Holt-Romania social workers, I examined post-placement reports of ten families whose children still exhibit after-effects of institutionalization. I reviewed these reports for difficulties still present, family coping strategies, and

strengths and positive qualities the children possessed. Listed below are some of the lessons from this review that might be helpful to other adoptive parents.

1. Seek Appropriate Resources

All the families sought resources and treatments for their children; some needed only speech therapy or assistance with English, while others sought much more help. The important lesson is that every adoptive family must be willing to seek out whatever resources and treatments their children need in a timely manner. Do not wait until a child arrives to do this. Be proactive and learn beforehand what community resources are available. The most common assistance families obtain for children from institutional settings are speech and occupational therapy. Also locate physicians, counselors, and psychologists who are familiar with international adoption and institutionalization issues. One's direct service agency and other adoptive parents should also be able to help.

2. Stay Committed

All the families showed commitment to assisting their child however they could, even if progress was slow. It was evident that each child's most important resource was his or her family. A commitment to the child's wellbeing may be the single most important factor in a successful adoption.

3. Have the Right Attitude

Developing the right attitude ahead of time is essential. It is important for adoptive parents to enter adoption with realistic expectations and a basic understanding of issues related to their child's institutionalization and abandonment. The parents' commitment should begin even before a child is referred. It is a natural tendency for prospective parents to create fantasies of what their future children will be like. It is better, however, for them to love and accept their future children for who they really are.

4. Have Hope

I noticed an undercurrent of hope throughout almost all these cases. As long as families could see that their children were making progress, even if in some cases it was in very small increments, families appeared hopeful that progress would continue and they and their children would be okay in the end. Armed with hope, families were able "to see the light at the end of the tunnel," whether it was near or far away.

5. Maintain Optimism, Flexibility, Patience, and a Sense of Humor

These qualities are mentioned together because the presence of one generally means the presence of one or more of the others as well. Two or more of these qualities, particularly flexibility and patience, were present with most of the ten families reviewed. A study involving a questionnaire returned by a large

number of families who adopted from Romania revealed that 90 percent had a positive view of their adoption. Being satisfied with their adoptions, however, did not mean the adoptions were problem-free. Being flexible and patient with the adoption process, not only prior to a child's arrival home, but also throughout the adjustment periods, and seeking out resources needed at different stages certainly contributes to an optimistic outlook. A consistent sense of humor helps foster optimism and a healthy perspective.

6. Pray for Bonding

In all cases reviewed, families appeared to be the most optimistic and hopeful about their adoptions when their children showed attachment (love, affection, trust, faith) to them. This was the most important overriding factor. As long as their children showed affection, or at least exhibited gradual progress toward that end, it seemed to be easier to deal with other problems or delays. In these ten cases, those children with the strongest attachments had previously formed an attachment with a caretaker, social worker, or foster parent, or had lived for a significant period of time during their early years with their birth family.

7. Be Informed

Before deciding on a child referral it is important for adopting parents to be as informed as possible. Even if information is scarce, it always helps to consult a pediatrician or other specialist before making a final decision. The Internet also can provide a wealth of medical information on adoption. I strongly recommend that the medical professional consulted be familiar with the special needs and concerns of internationally adopted children. Many families are

now sending their referred child's information to one of the two dozen or so North American clinics specializing in international adoption medicine for consultation and feedback prior to making a decision. These clinics generally are run by physicians who have traveled extensively and have in-depth knowledge about common medical and institutionalization issues regarding children being adopted from other countries. The feedback they can provide could be invaluable.

In Summary

So, how are adopted children doing? Although the age and health of a child upon placement plays an important role, the more significant factors are those mentioned in the above lessons. The majority appear to be doing very well in their new homes and are forming positive attachments. ♦

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Appropriate Giving (cont. from page 20)

George Steiner, Children's HopeChest, Palmer Lake, CO

I think orphans have their own psychology: "I'm an orphan; I deserve to be taken care of; I deserve gifts; I deserve things that are given to me." And when they get out, guess what? That does not happen. I think there are some approaches we can take to change this dependency. Some of us have many volunteers traveling with us who, of course, want to share. But it concerns me when we have a group of 25 people handing out hair bows and candy bars in an orphanage, knowing that, in this chaos, some kids will get a lot more than others. One alternative at our camps, for instance, is to set up a camp store, rather than give small gifts to all the kids. The kids then have an opportunity to earn points by cleaning their

rooms, attending sessions, and being on time to different events. The Russian teachers at the camp give points to the kids, who then can trade their points for gifts at the store. We are seeing this implemented in several orphanages as well, with points being given for good grades and for helpfulness with younger kids. In the end they earn prizes we easily could give them, but it is a better way to help them. Giving in a constructive way is a great struggle. In the process we need to focus on what is best for the kids, not what is best for us. ♦

Appropriate Giving

Editor's Note: *The National Summit on Children at Risk held in Atlanta, GA, 9-11 November 2000, included many valuable discussion periods. Below are excerpts of insightful comments from participants on "appropriate giving."*

The main reason we go is to share the gospel. Of all the needs, the gospel is the most pressing. I do not want our teams to be seen just as Santa Claus. The challenge is to give appropriately so that relationships are most important, not the riches we bring.

Vic Jackopson, Hope Now, Southampton, England

Hope Now works with ten orphanages and two rescue shelters as well as seven of our own cottage homes. These homes are parented by Christians as an alternative to huge, impersonal institutions. We have in recent years taken on more major projects to address some of the ongoing health needs in orphanages. For instance, many institutions lack indoor toilet facilities and lighting for their outside privies. When temperatures reach 30 degrees below zero and an institution lacks basic indoor facilities, the alternative frequently is bedwetting, which is endemic in orphanages in any case. We have a program now that is headed by a pediatrician to combat bedwetting. We also provide industrial washing machines to alleviate the chore of hand washing. In one instance, we have built indoor toilet facilities with hot and cold showers, where before there was no hot water.

What I would like to add is the importance of identifying everything that is done that is caring, loving, and humane with the Christian message. We have seen many of our children, three of our directors, and other staff come to know the Lord. The importance of sitting down with children, even to teach them a song, cannot be overemphasized. I grew up in an orphanage for the first 15 years of my life and to this day I remember this song: "I'd rather be a little one climbing up, than a big one tumbling down; I'd rather be a little one with a smile, than a big one with a frown; I'd rather be poor and carry my cross, than rich and lose my crown; I'd rather be a little one climbing up, than a big one tumbling

down." When I was eight years old I was taught that song by someone who came to visit me. Although I left the orphanage, lived on the streets, joined a gang, and eventually went to prison, I still remembered it. I am quite sure that the love expressed through that person who came to our orphanage was one of the reasons I eventually came to Christ. So value little things: Every expression of love is important.

Jack Stevenson, Mission Society for United Methodists, Hermitage, PA

When we go to the orphanage and they clap and thank us for bringing them gifts, we say the gifts are from Christians in the West. But they really come from God because God loves them. I always try to emphasize that the gifts are really from God.

Tanya Vinogradova, Mission Society for United Methodists, Khabarovsk, Siberia

One director shared with us that orphanage graduates do not realize that tea is not naturally sweet, that sugar has to be added. Orphans are just accustomed to having food put in front of them. I think that is why we are so excited about the sewing projects that give them some money. They learn they need to work, and if they do, they will be able to buy things for themselves.

Trent Timberlake, Mission Russia Outreach, Alpharetta, GA

I have been working to set up a computer lab in an orphanage to teach computer skills. This helps both boys and girls because it gives them a marketable skill by the time they leave school. At the same time I struggle with the question of the appropriateness of giving. When I contact orphanages in St. Petersburg I ask what are their needs. I receive long lists with everything from toilets to toilet paper to shoes and socks. So we try to discern what God is calling us to do. But the main reason we go is to share the gospel. Of all the needs, the gospel is the most pressing. I do not want our teams to be seen just as Santa Claus. I think the appropriateness of giving is a real issue. We in the West are so wealthy and have such a capacity to provide so much. The challenge is to give appropriately so that relationships are most important, not the riches we bring.

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