



Toward a World Without Orphans

By Luis Bush

"Over 25,000 Ebola Orphans at Risk: Churches join effort to care for vulnerable children who have lost one or both parents in West Africa" was reported in an article of Christianity Today dated November 20, 2014. "My mama is dead in my house and we don't know what to do," the article began followed by the story of an 8-year-old boy who called the national hotline in Sierra Leone, by dialing 1-1-7 earlier this month. The father had already died, presumably from Ebola, and this boy was now head of the household with five younger siblings."¹

A few weeks earlier, BBC News reported "at least 3,700 children in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone who have lost one or both parents to Ebola this year face being shunned... Children were discovered alone in the hospitals where their parents had died, or back in their communities where, if they were lucky, they were being fed by neighbors - but all other contact with them was being avoided."² The crisis of Ebola orphans has captured the attention and heart of many people in our world today and accentuates the growing challenge of the rise of orphans worldwide.



Susan Hillis & children, November, Sierra Leone

Orphanages that have been set up to deal with the orphan challenge in many countries around the world have serious limitations. "Susan Hillis, a senior staff adviser in global health with the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), stated during the November interview from Freetown, Sierra Leone, 'We know institutional living leads to brain damage in children.' Christians in Liberia and Sierra Leone are beginning to join the global World Without Orphans movement, which emphasizes placement of orphans into local families and supporting them long-term." "We would do much better to try to help build up

leaders here to find the Sierra Leonean solution to what the leaders are telling us they're really

wanting God to do in their country—to bring Sierra Leone to a point that there's a Sierra Leone without orphans."³

The rapid rise in orphans is not only a phenomenon in West Africa. According to the publication of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute, "the rate of newly orphaned children per year is increasing at a higher rate than before." In fact, "those in the developing world are faced with the reality that more than 10 percent of their population under 18 is an orphan."⁴

The orphan challenge, however, is not only due to the sheer numbers but also to the current condition and the future consideration of orphans and vulnerable children in both developed and developing countries. Ruslan Maliuta, facilitator for the Transform World 2020 Orphan Challenge and WWO, presented the case at the Lausanne Consultation on Children at Risk held November 20-24 in Quito, Ecuador that violence is the biggest risk for children in the world citing the findings of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as follows: "More than 1 billion children—half of all the children in the world—are victims of violence every year."⁵ And who are at the front line of the children suffering from acts of violence? It's the children who have no safe, stable, and nurturing relationships with loving and caring adults. Whether its disease, poverty or violence those greatest at risk are the orphans.

A few days earlier, on November 9, the national orphan care movement was held in Ukraine with thousands of people gathered at St. Michael's Square in downtown Kyiv for a special service dedicated to National Day of Prayer for Orphans (Orphan Sunday) with the presence of Petro Poroshenko, the President of Ukraine. The heads of all Ukrainian Christian confessions: Orthodox, Catholic, and Evangelical, shared messages and conducted prayers for children along with First Lady Marina Poroshenko and Roman Korniyko, President of the Alliance for Ukraine without Orphans. After the prayers First Lady released a white dove as a symbol of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of adoption.⁶



Ruslan Maliuta noted that "For the first time the spiritual leaders of our nation prayed together with the head of the state for every child to experience God's love and for Ukraine to become a nation without orphans". Ruslan is the co-founder and until recently served as President of the Alliance for Ukraine Without Orphans. He is a recipient of the medal "For Services" from the President of Ukraine and was the candidate from Ukraine to the UN Committee on Rights of the Child.

Just as Christians in Ukraine with the support of the press and the government have launched the movement for a Ukraine Without Orphans in 2010, Liberia and Sierra Leone have begun to join the global WWO.

The WWO movement was begun a few years ago with the vision that all orphans and vulnerable children will be given the opportunity to grow in loving and caring families and will know their Heavenly Father. At the Transform World Global Challenges Summit in 2012 in Indonesia forty-five delegates of the Orphan Challenge refined the vision and developed five expected outcomes for the movement for 2020.

The message of the WWO is that all children were created to be in a loving and caring family and not an orphanage. The method for the church is to build strong Christian families to help children stop being orphans. Churches are to spread the most central message that in the Bible there is no mention of orphanages but rather families adopting children. The measured approach for any nation is not rush to close all orphanages but for the church first to prepare families.

Among other things WWO team prayed to be used by God to initiate thirty national orphan care movements and help Christian churches around the world to be aware of the orphan challenge as well as motivated to action and equipped with best strategies to respond to this need. As of now Christians in more than twenty countries are at different stages of catalyzing and growing their national movements to promote the placement of children in families within their local contexts. Just this year WWO Facilitation Team members traveled all over the world, from Kyrgyzstan to Colombia, from South Africa to Romania, and many other places, to cast the vision, build partnerships, and train leaders. There is a reason to believe that many more than thirty national movements will come to life by 2020!

To learn more details about the WWO movement, please, [download its booklet](#) and visit the website: www.worldwithoutorphans.org. If you would like to get involved in the WWO movement and are interested in a national orphan care initiative in your country, please, contact info@worldwithoutorphans.org.



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¹ Timothy C. Morgan, "Over 25,000 Ebola Orphans at Risk: Churches join effort to care for vulnerable children who have lost one or both parents in West Africa," November 20, 2014, Christianity Today, www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2014/november-web-only/ebola-orphans.html (accessed December 1, 2014).

² "Ebola Outbreak: 'Thousands of Orphans Shunned,'" September 30, 2014, BBC News, www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-29424919 (accessed December 1, 2014).

³ Timothy C. Morgan, "Over 25,000 Ebola Orphans at Risk: Churches join effort to care for vulnerable children who have lost one or both parents in West Africa," November 20, 2014, Christianity Today, www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2014/november-web-only/ebola-orphans.html (accessed December 1, 2014).

⁴ Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute, 2011, www.ccaainstitute.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=94:todaySORPHANCRISIS&catid=28:the-need-abroad&Itemid=6 (accessed December 1, 2014).

⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/vacs/index.html (accessed December 1, 2014).

⁶ www.president.gov.ua/gallery/2346.html (accessed December 1, 2014).
